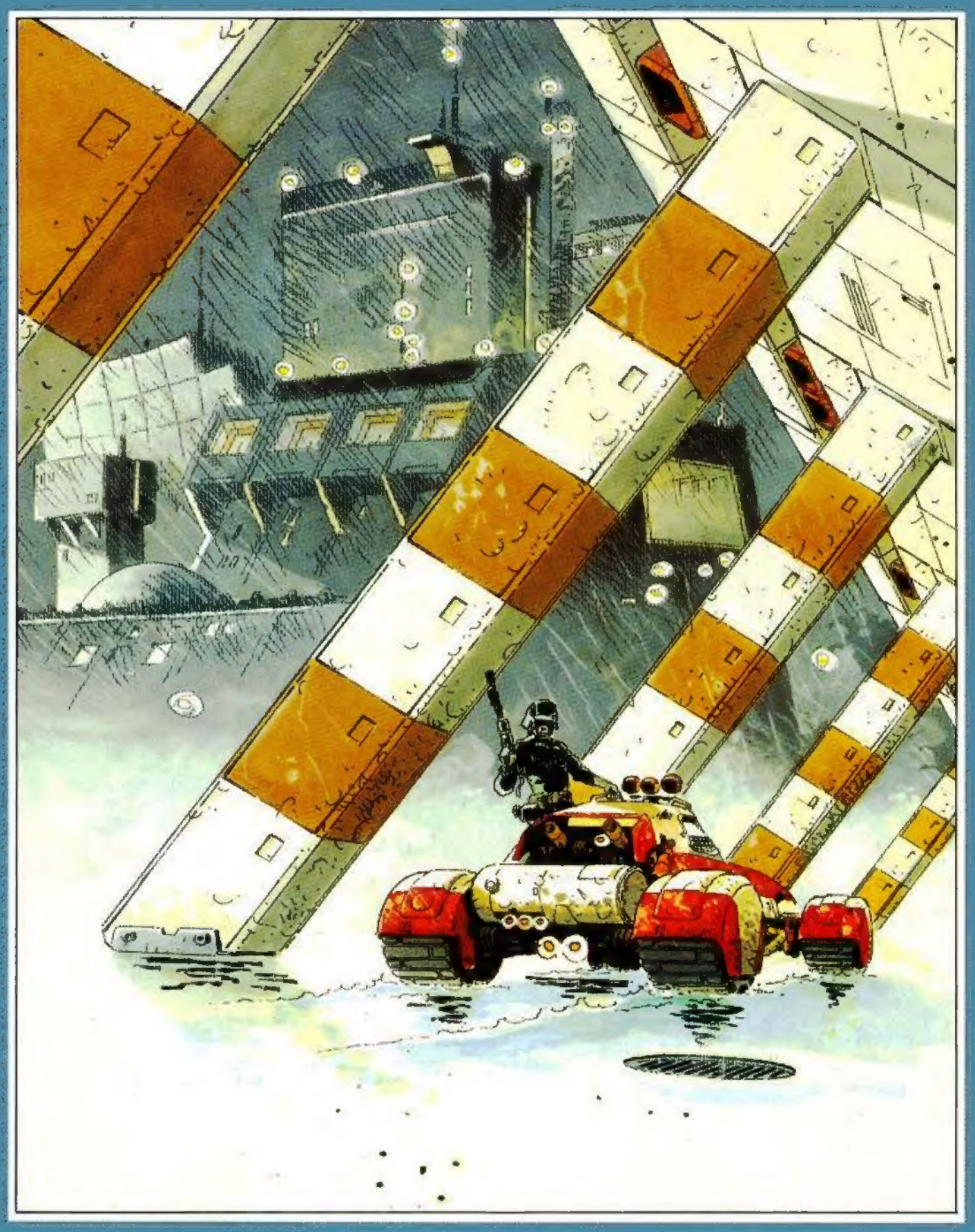
The Forever War II. Lieutenant Mandella

Joe Haldeman

THE FOREVER WAR 2

Marvano

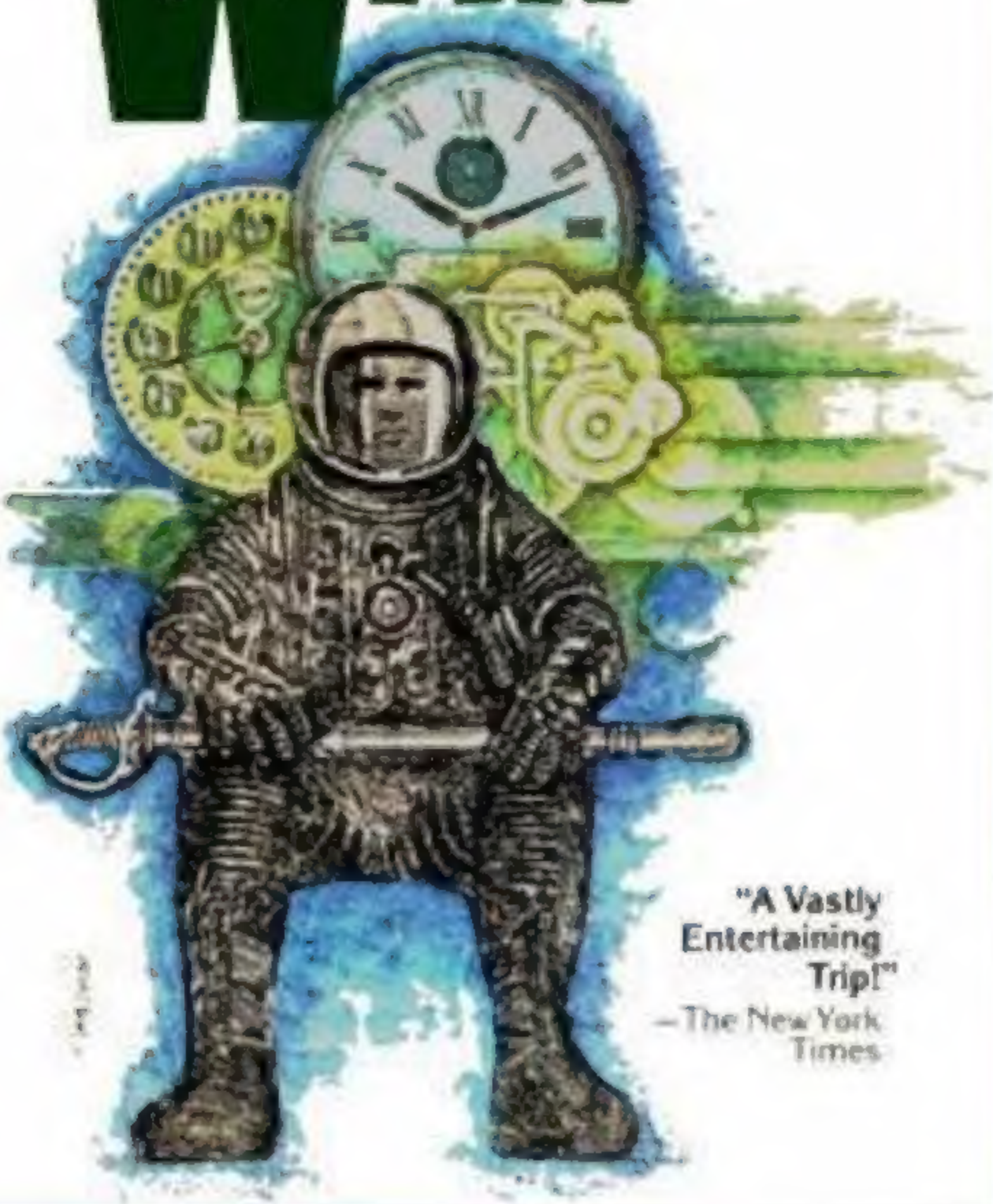


24767/$1.50

A DAZZLING & POWERFUL SCIENCE FICTION CATCH-22!

THE FOREVER WAR

JOE HALDEMAN



"A Vastly Entertaining Trip!"
—The New York Times

WHAT HAS GONE ON BEFORE:

- On December 10, 2007, a pilot vessel was intercepted and destroyed by a space ship of extraterrestrial origin. The attack occurred near the star Aldebaran in the constellation of Taurus. The United Nations Exploratory Force was founded to protect such expeditions, and so fifty men and fifty women with I.Q.s in excess of 150 and bodies of unusual strength were recruited and trained to defeat an enemy no one had ever seen.

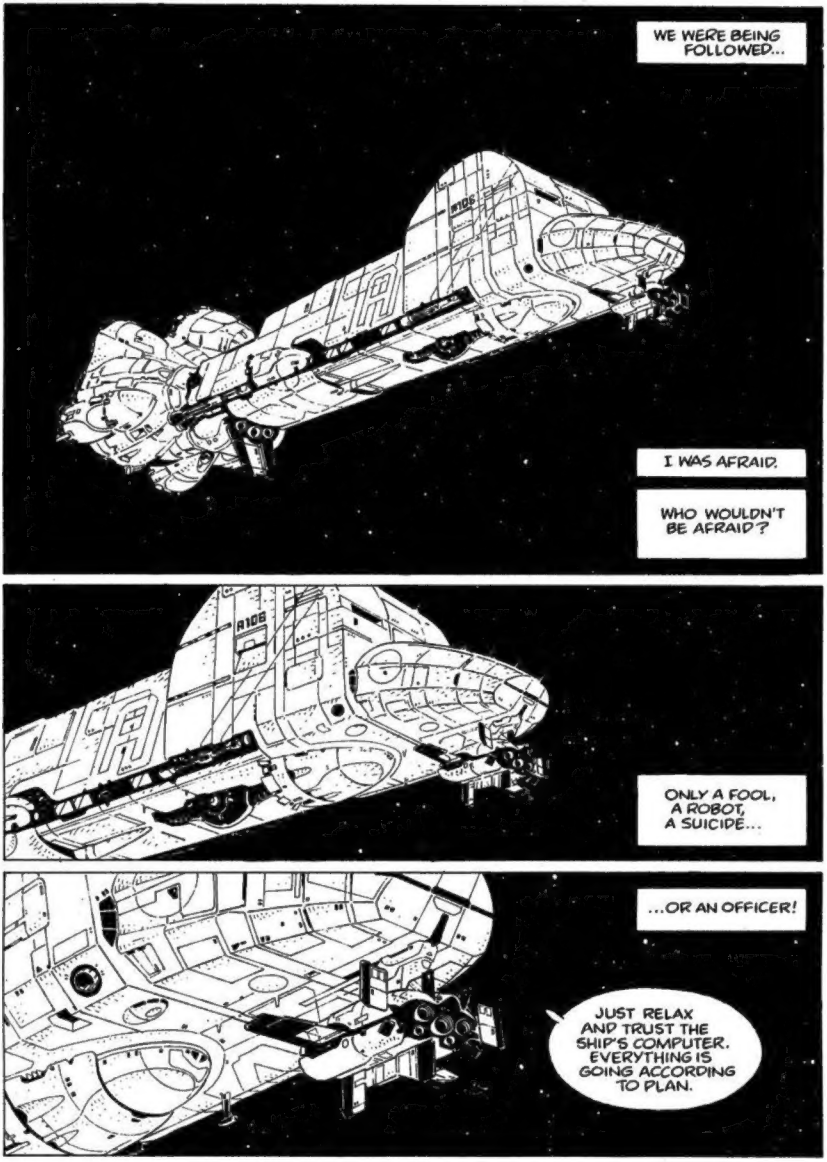
- Landing on the planet Aleph, the corps located the Taurans. Carefully approaching the enemy base, the troops prepared for their first true encounter with the enemy. The troop's orders: overrun the base, leaving as much intact as possible...and take one prisoner...only one...

- Under the influence of a special post-hypnotic suggestion implanted during training , the troops demolish the base, slaughter most of the Taurans on the base and cause several unintentional injuries among their own. As the troops watched the Tauran escape vessel rocket off planet, they were left with the knowledge that the war had only begun and that next time the Taurans would be ready...

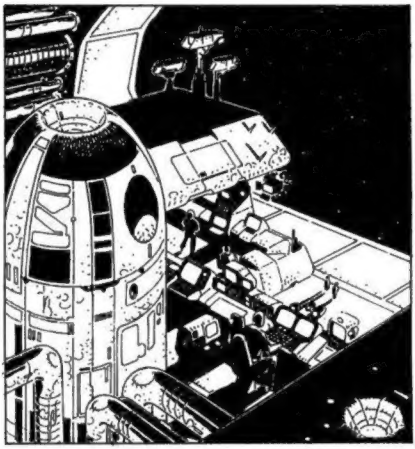
THE FOREVER WAR

BY
HALDEMAN & MARVANO

BOOK TWO
CHAPTER ONE


WE WERE BEING FOLLOWED...
I WAS AFRAID.
WHO WOULDN'T BE AFRAID?
ONLY A FOOL, A ROBOT, A SUICIDE...
...OR AN OFFICER!
JUST RELAX AND TRUST THE SHIP'S COMPUTER. EVERYTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.

THE ARMY'S GODDAMN PLANS. WE CAME OUT OF A COLLAPSAR JUMP AND A TAURAN CRUISER HAD BEEN TRACKING US SINCE YOD-4. I'M SURE THEY'D ***PLANNED*** ON THAT. WE WERE RUNNING HARD AND RUNNING SCARED.

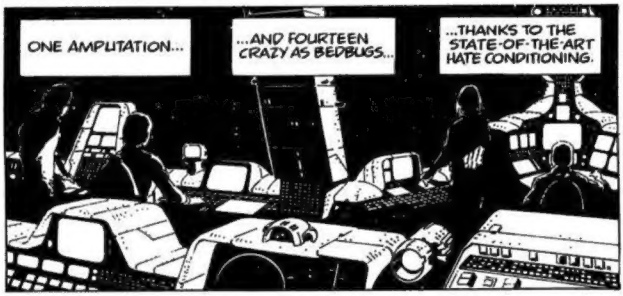


THE SURVIVORS OF THE ALEPH MASSACRE WERE ALL ON BOARD...

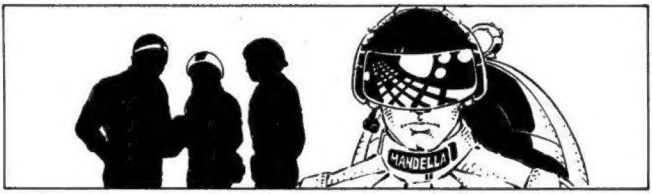
PLUS TWENTY-NINE VIRGINS FROM STARGATE...

TO REPLACE THE NINETEEN WE LOST DURING THAT RAID.

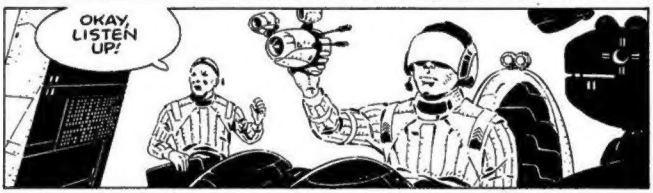
FOUR DEAD...



I'D BEEN PROMOTED TO SERGEANT. SHOWS HOW HARD UP THEY WERE FOR NON-COMS.

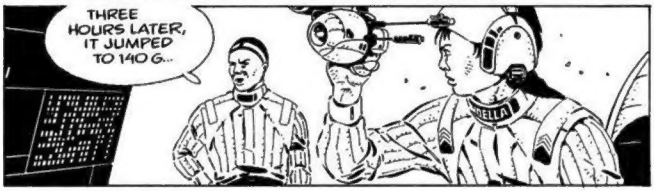


I'D BEEN IN THE ARMY FOR TEN YEARS, BUT HAD ONLY AGED TWO YEARS IN REAL TIME.



TIME PARADOX. WHILE WE BUZZED AROUND FOR A FEW MONTHS NEAR THE SPEED OF LIGHT--COLLAPSAR MANEUVERS--YEARS WENT BY ON EARTH.

AFTER THIS NEXT CAMPAIGN I COULD RETIRE: A TWENTY-FIVE YEAR OLD VETERAN WITH TWENTY YEARS OF SERVICE.

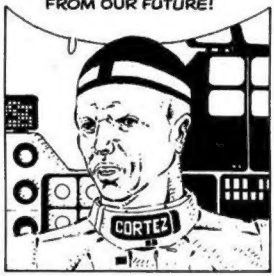


IF I SURVIVED, OF COURSE, AND IF...

WHAT?

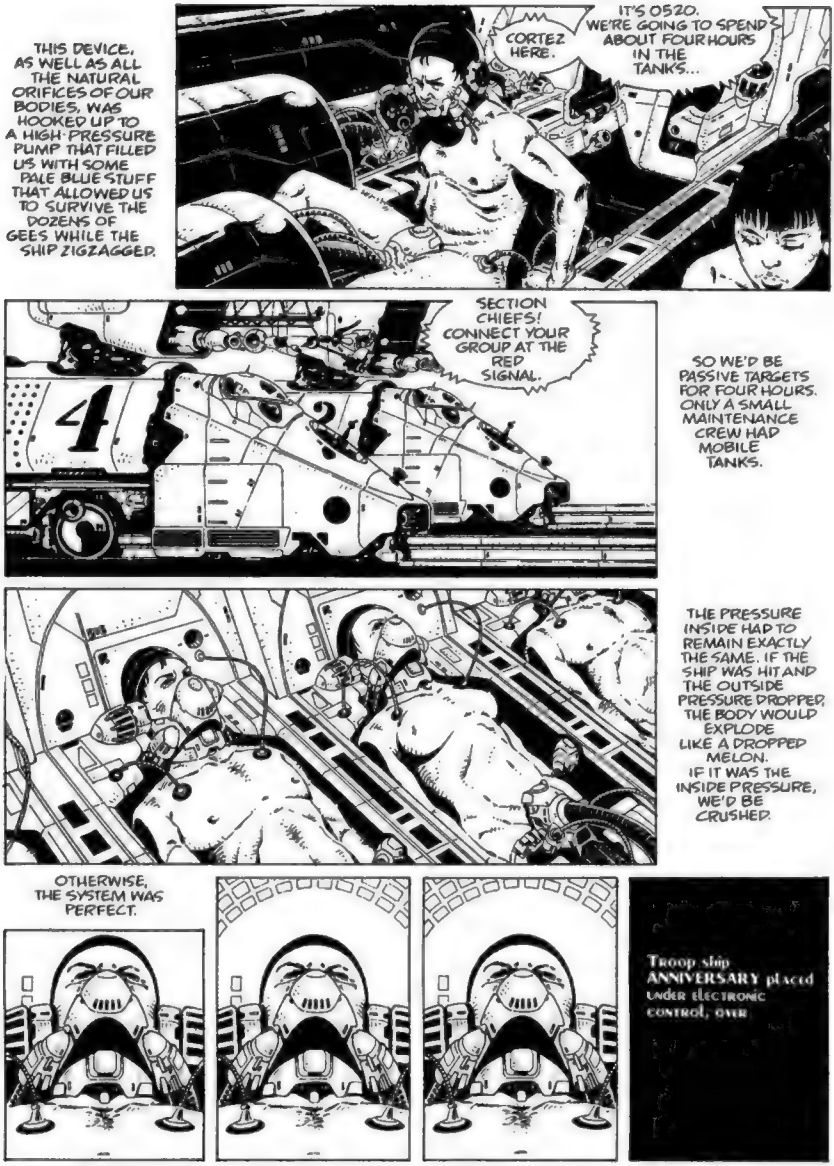
AND NOW ANOTHER JUMP TO 210 G.
GOOD GOD!
IT IS THEREFORE OBVIOUS THAT THAT DEVICE IS CAPABLE OF ACCELERATION TWICE AS GREAT AS THE ENEMY MISSILES WE'VE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE.

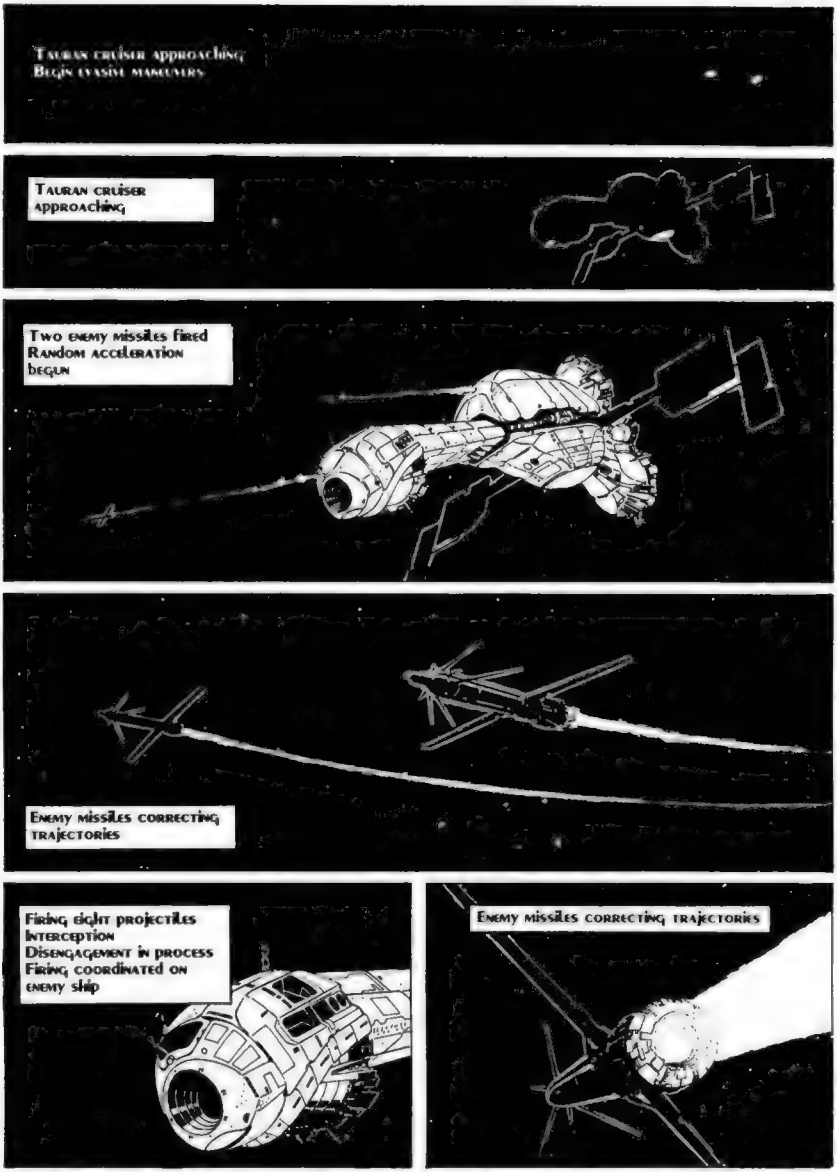
I CAN ONLY SEE ONE EXPLANATION: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE ENCOUNTERED SOMETHING THAT MAY WIN OR LOSE THE WAR--LITERAL FUTURE SHOCK. THIS OPPONENT COMES FROM OUR FUTURE!

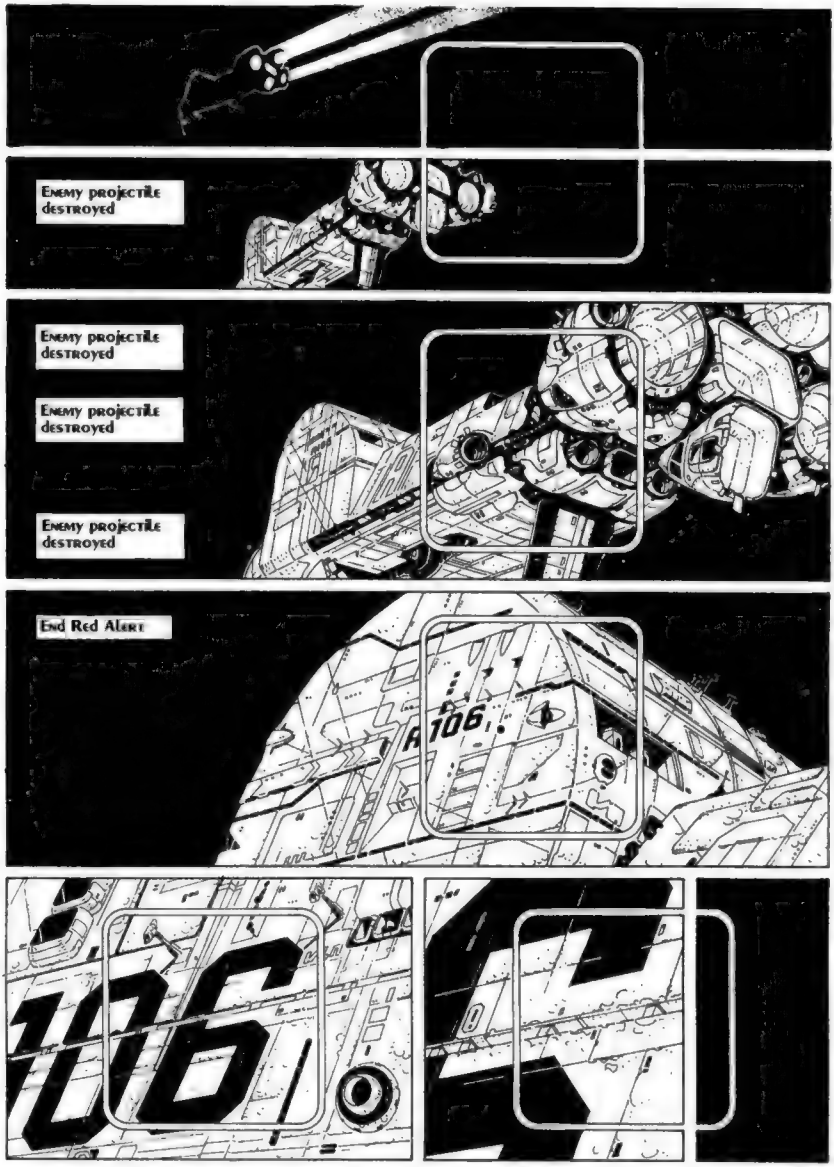


A LOT TO THINK ABOUT...
CORPORAL POTTER.
HE ALWAYS CALLED HER BY HER RANK TO REMIND HER SHE HADN'T BEEN PROMOTED WITH THE REST OF US.
HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN FIGHTING THE TAURANS ON ALEPH?
CLOSE TO EIGHT OF OUR MONTHS, LIEUTENANT.
CORRECT. BUT ON EARTH, AND ALSO ON THE TAURANS' HOME PLANET, MORE THAN NINE YEARS HAVE PASSED WHILE WE JUMPED FROM COLAPSAR TO COLAPSAR.
NINE YEARS OF BOOMING TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS. THAT HAPPENS DURING WAR.
THE LONGER THE WAR, THE MORE PRONOUNCED THE EFFECT. THE TAURANS DON'T HAVE A MONOPOLY ON IT...
IT'S JUST AS LIKELY THAT NEXT TIME WE'LL BE FROM *THEIR* FUTURE...
...AND THEY'LL BE IN DEEP SHIT, THIS TIME IT'S US.
THIS IS THE COMMODORE. THE ENEMY HAS COME WITHIN FIVE HUNDRED MILLION KILOMETERS. WE MUST TAKE EVASIVE ACTION AT MAXIMUM ACCELERATION. YOU HAVE TEN MINUTES TO GET INTO YOUR SHELLS. *DO IT!*

THE ACCELERATION SHELLS WERE A NIGHTMARE EVEN WHEN IT WAS JUST PRACTICE...
A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, MARYGAY.
I'M JUST A CORPORAL, SERGEANT. THEY DON'T PAY ME TO THINK.
WANT MY STRIPES?
I DON'T LIKE THIS AT ALL, WILLIAM.
308
ME NEITHER. I'D RATHER PLAY SOLDIER ON A PORTAL PLANET THAN LIE THERE HELPLESS, PUMPED UP, WAITING...
216
I KNOW...
308
WHILE THE COMPUTER MAKES A MILLION DECISIONS A SECOND. ALL OF THEM RIGHT, OF COURSE.
308
GOOD LUCK, WILL.
THE SAME TO YOU, MARYGAY.
THE ACCELERATION TANK: THE ARMY'S LATEST GADGET. IT MADE SURE THAT THE PRESSURE INSIDE OUR BODIES EQUALED THE PRESSURE OUTSIDE DURING EVASIVE ACTION--EXTENDED PERIODS OF VIOLENTLY CHANGING ACCELERATION.
ON STARGATE, THEY'D IMPLANTED A REGULATOR ABOVE THE LEFT HIP, RIGHT OVER YOUR BLOOD TYPE TATOO.


THIS DEVICE, AS WELL AS ALL THE NATURAL ORIFICES OF OUR BODIES, WAS HOOKED UP TO A HIGH-PRESSURE PUMP THAT FILLED US WITH SOME PALE BLUE STUFF THAT ALLOWED US TO SURVIVE THE DOZENS OF GEES WHILE THE SHIP ZIGZAGGED.
CORTEZ HERE.
IT'S 0520. WE'RE GOING TO SPEND ABOUT FOUR HOURS IN THE TANKS...
SECTION CHIEFS! CONNECT YOUR GROUP AT THE RED SIGNAL.
SO WE'D BE PASSIVE TARGETS FOR FOUR HOURS. ONLY A SMALL MAINTENANCE CREW HAD MOBILE TANKS.
THE PRESSURE INSIDE HAD TO REMAIN EXACTLY THE SAME. IF THE SHIP WAS HIT AND THE OUTSIDE PRESSURE DROPPED, THE BODY WOULD EXPLODE LIKE A DROPPED MELON. IF IT WAS THE INSIDE PRESSURE, WE'D BE CRUSHED.
OTHERWISE, THE SYSTEM WAS PERFECT.
Troop ship ANNIVERSARY placed under electronic control, over


Tauran cruiser approaching
Begin evasive maneuvers
Tauran cruiser approaching
Two enemy missiles fired
Random acceleration begun
Enemy missiles correcting trajectories
Firing eight projectiles
Interception
Disengagement in process
Firing coordinated on enemy ship
Enemy missiles correcting trajectories


Enemy projectile destroyed
Enemy projectile destroyed
Enemy projectile destroyed
End Red Alert
A106
106

THE PRESSURE WAS ALMOST DOWN TO NORMAL BEFORE I REALIZED WE WERE ALIVE; WE HAD WON...
I WAS ONLY PARTLY RIGHT...
MANDELLA! ROGER'S HERE! GO TO SECTION 3. THERE'S A PROBLEM. DALTON HAD TO DEPRESSURIZE IT FROM CONTROL.
216
SECTION 3! MARYGAY'S SECTION!
I CROSSED THE SHIP IN BARE FEET. THE SMELL WAS FRIGHTENING, BURNT METAL AND OZONE AND SOMETHING ELSE. PEOPLE WERE STAGGERING OUT OF THE SECTION...
PALE, CONFUSED, LURCHING...
INSIDE, SOMEONE WAS SHOUTING...
IT WAS STRUVE, MARYGAY'S ASSISTANT. HE WAS TALKING LOUD AND FAST INTO HIS TRANSMITTER.
MEDIC! MEDIC! QUICK!
406
AND GOD YES, WE NEED BLOOD!

MARYGAY STILL LAY IN HER TANK...
406
...AND I MEAN NOW!
EVERY CENTIMETER OF HER BODY WAS COVERED IN BLOOD.
A PINK FOAM RAN FROM HER MOUTH...
I POPPED HER TANK MANUALLY, AND...
MANDELLA!
EACH TIME SHE BREATHED, WITH A HOARSE SOUND...
HEY, MANDELLA!
TURN HER OVER AND READ ME HER BLOOD TYPE.
GROUP O NEGATIVE, DAMN IT!
EXCUSE ME. TYPE O, RHESUS NEGATIVE.
406
I'D SEEN THAT TATTOO TEN THOUSAND TIMES!
SORRY YOU HAD TO WAIT... TOO MUCH WORK.
HIS VOICE WAS WEARY...
DOC WILSON ARRIVED, WITH TWO NURSES.
FOLLOW THAT RELIEF TUBE DOWN A COUPLE OF METERS AND PINCH IT OFF. SEE IF SHE'S PASSED ANY BLOOD.
DOC WILSON...
MORE PATIENTS, DOCTOR HARMONY?
NO. EXPLOSIVE DECOMPRESSION FOR THE OTHERS. CAN I HELP HERE?
THE OTHERS?!
...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "THE OTHERS"? WHAT'S HAPPENED?
WHAT?
HARMONY
THEN YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT THE SHIP'S BEEN HIT?
HIT? BUT WE'RE STILL MOVING!
YES...
A REAL MIRACLE. NEITHER THE PRINCIPLE COMMAND AREAS NOR THE VITAL EQUIPMENT WERE HIT...
ONLY FOUR OCCUPIED SECTIONS AND THE ARMOR BAY WERE DESTROYED...
FOUR!
THIRD COMPANY, WILLIAM. NO SURVIVORS. I'M SORRY.
HOLLISTER... BOURS... PERRY... CHAVEZ...
MY GOD!
CHIN...
PETROV...
AL-SADAT...
BUSIA...
MAXWELL...
JONES...
NEGULESCO...
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT COULD CAUSE THIS. WE ONLY KNOW THAT IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN AT ANY TIME...

THE FOREVER WAR

BY
HALDEMAN & MARVANO

BOOK TWO
CHAPTER TWO

WE SUCCEEDED IN TURNING ASIDE THEIR MISSILES AND IN DESTROYING THEIR CRUISER. THERE WAS NOTHING ON OUR SENSORS. AND THEY STILL HAD US.
A REMOTE-CONTROLLED OUTSIDE CAMERA FILMED THE TRAJECTORY OF WHAT HIT US. IT'S STUPEFYING...
THIS IS SLOWED DOWN BY A FACTOR OF TEN THOUSAND...
A MISSILE THE SIZE OF A LARGE DUST MOTE, TRAVELING AT NINE-TENTHS THE SPEED OF LIGHT..
A POWERFUL MINATURIZED WEAPON THAT COULD COST US THE WAR.
THE ANNIVERSARY IS STILL COMBAT-READY. WE COULD CONTINUE OUR MISSION AND SEND A MESSAGE BY PROBE TO H.Q....
THE COMPUTER GIVES US A 62% CHANCE OF SUCCESS. BUT ONLY A 30% CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.
THIS NEW WEAPON OBLIGATES ME TO MAKE THE MOST DIFFICULT DECISION OF MY MILITARY CAREER.
OUR RAID IS TERMINATED. FROM NOW ON, WE WILL AVOID ALL CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY. HEAD FOR HOME.
I WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO APPEAR BEFORE A COURT MARTIAL FOR REFUSING TO FIGHT...
...BUT THIS EVIDENCE ACQUIRED AT THE EXPENSE OF THE ANNIVERSARY MUST BE EXAMINED BY EXPERTS AT STARGATE.
IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ONE SOLDIER'S CAREER!
COMMON SENSE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. HE HAD NOTHING SO PRIMITIVE AND UNMILITARY AS A WILL TO LIVE.

WE SPENT THE REST OF THE VOYAGE PATCHING UP THE SHIP WITHOUT TOUCHING THE PRECIOUS EVIDENCE ON WHICH COMMODORE QUINSANA WAS GAMBLING HIS CAREER.
THE HARDEST PART WAS JETTISONING THE CADAVERS INTO SPACE.
ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT HAD EXPLODED IN THE TANKS.
YES?
AH! WILLIAM...
HOW IS SHE?
IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD TO SEE HER NOW. A LITTLE ETHYL ALCOHOL?
IS SHE OUT OF DANGER?
ON EARTH, SHE WOULD BE. JUST SPRINKLE SOME MAGIC DUST IN THE ABDOMINAL CAVITY AND PASTE HER UP.

A PART OF HER LOWER INTESTINE WAS TORN. WE HAVE REPLACED AND RESTITCHED THE ESSENTIAL PART.
STANDARD MEDICATION, TOO, WITH AN ARTIFICIAL CULTURE TO REESTABLISH THE DEAD INTESTINAL FLORA KILLED BY STERILIZATION.
Mm...
DOCTORS DON'T SEEM TO REALIZE MOST OF US COULD GET ALONG FINE WITHOUT SEEING OURSELVES AS FRAGILE BAGS OF SKIN FILLED WITH OBSCENE GLOP.
MANGELS
SHE'LL SOON BE ON HER FEET, BUT I DOUBT THAT HER DIGESTIVE TRACT WILL BE ABLE TO STAND ACCELERATIONS HIGHER THAN 2G...
BUT... WE'RE BOUND TO GO OVER TWO ON THE FINAL APPROACH!
I KNOW. I KNOW. WE CAN JUST HOPE SHE'LL BE MENDED BY THEN. IT'S SAD; SHE WAS SPECIAL TO YOU. BUT WE'VE HAD SO MUCH DEATH... YOU OUGHT TO BE GETTING USED TO IT. COME TO TERMS WITH IT.
YOU'RE GETTING PRETTY HARD-BOILED.
JUST REALISTIC. I HAVE A FEELING WE'RE HEADED FOR A LOT MORE DEATH AND SORROW.
MONY
NOT FOR ME. WE GET TO STARGATE AND I'M A CIVILIAN. MY TWO YEARS ARE IS UP.
I WOULDN'T BANK ON IT. THE JOKER'S WHO SIGNED US UP COULD JUST AS WELL LENGTHEN THE SENTENCE. CHANGE IT TO FIVE YEARS...
OR SIX, OR TWENTY. OR THE DURATION. BUT THEY WON'T. IT WOULD BE MUTINY.
I DON'T KNOW. IF THEY COULD CONDITION US TO MURDER ON CUE--
HARMONY
THEY CAN CONDITION US TO DO ALMOST ANYTHING. ANYTHING!
ANYTHING? RE-ENLIST?
I FELT A COLD SHIVER DOWN MY BACK...

WE ARRIVED AT *STARGATE* AT THE END OF 2036, EARTH CALENDAR. OBSOLETE NOW FOR COMBAT, THE GOOD OLD *EARTH'S HOPE* WAS WAITING TO BRING BACK TO EARTH ITS CARGO OF DEMORALIZED SOLDIERS.
WE WERE DISCHARGED--
FREE MEN AND WOMEN...
RITTER

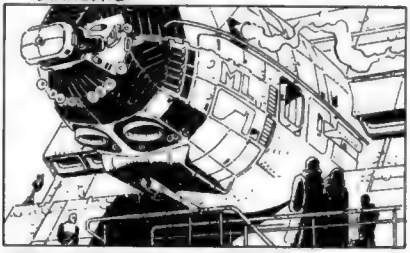
THE SURVIVORS OF THE FIRST INFANTRY BATTALION TO ENGAGE THE TAURANS IN COMBAT HAVE RETURNED TO EARTH...
TWENTY-SIX YEARS AFTER GOING INTO SPACE, THEY WERE WELCOMED HOME BY YAKUBU OJOKWU, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.
WE HADN'T EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT HERE WE WERE CONSIDERED HEROES. NOT PAWNS, NOT VICTIMS. HEROES!
A DELIRIOUS CROWD CHEERED US. BUT IT WAS NO TRICK TO ROUND UP A FEW TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WARM BODIES WHEN MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORLD WAS UNEMPLOYED.
"EARTH IS NO LONGER AS YOU KNOW IT," CORTEZ HAD SAID TO US.

THAT WAS AN UNDERSTATEMENT... SO MANY THINGS HAD HAPPENED IN MY ABSENCE... THE DEATH OF MY FATHER, FOR EXAMPLE.

OUR VETERANS HAVE BEEN SURPRISED BY THE SIZE OF OUR CITIES...

REBUILT FROM THE GROUND UP AFTER THE 2017 FOOD RIOTS..

DURING OUR CAMPAIGN, A GENERATION OF FAMILY NEWS AND MAIL HAD PILED UP AT STARGATE.

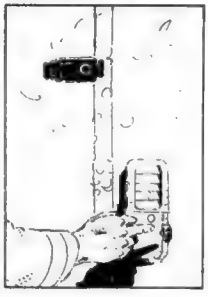


THE ARMY LOOKED AFTER OUR MORALE... AS CORTEZ AND OTHERS HAD WARNED US, WE WOULD PROBABLY WANT TO REENLIST SOON AFTER TOURING THIS WEIRD PLANET, NO LONGER HOME...

NEW TRENDS IN STYLE HAVE ASTONISHED OUR YOUNG WARRIORS, BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS...

AS WELL AS THIS CULTURAL GOLDEN AGE THAT WE'RE LIVING IN, THANKS TO THE LENGTHENING OF OUR LEISURE TIME, DUE TO ORGANIZED UNEMPLOYMENT.

I WAS STILL NOT READY FOR THAT...

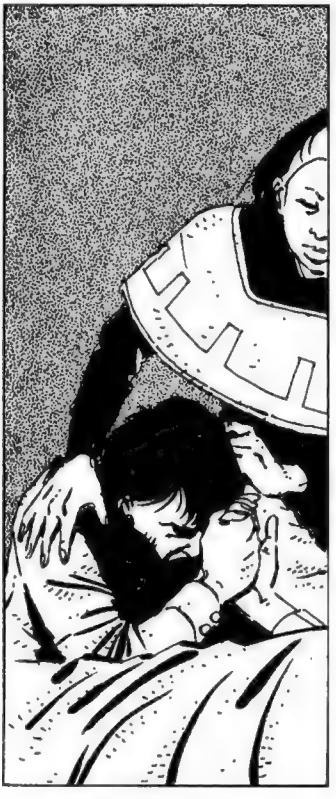


THEY DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOMES PROTECTING OUR MEGALOPOLISES FROM THE VAGARIES OF WEATHER...
NOR THE RATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD FOR THE GOOD OF ALL...
NOR, UNFORTUNATELY, THE APPEARANCE OF A CRIMINAL ELEMENT THAT...
BANG
A FEW MORE LINES, HAIR WHITE INSTEAD OF GREY...
I WAS SURPRISED AND RELIEVED AT HOW HAPPY I WAS TO SEE HER, HOLD HER.
ENTERING THE LIVING ROOM WAS A REAL SHOCKER--
WILLY!
LOOKING ALMOST LIKE MY FATHER.
MICHAEL? MIKE?
JESUS! MY YOUNGER BROTHER! MY LITTLE BROTHER!
I HADN'T SEEN HIM SINCE 2006!
HE WAS AT THE END OF A MONTH'S VACATION, GETTING READY TO RETURN TO THE MOON. I COULDN'T STOP STARING AT HIM. THE RESEMBLANCE TO DAD WAS UNCANNY.

THEY SAY THAT YOU WERE THE ONLY ONES TO FIGHT THE TAURANS HAND-TO-HAND.
IN A WAY. YOU'D HARDLY CALL IT FIGHTING. THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON.
WAS IT AWFUL? THEY SAID ON THE NEWS YOU LOST NINETEEN PEOPLE.
YES... BUT ONLY FOUR ACTUALLY KILLED BY TAURANS.
ONE WAS HIT BY OUR OWN LASERS. HE LOST AN ARM AND COMMITTED SUICIDE ON THE WAY BACK. ALL OF THE OTHERS... WELL, LOST THEIR MINDS.
OH? A TAURAN SECRET WEAPON?
...?
I TAKE IT YOU WEREN'T TOO WELL INFORMED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE...
IT'S THE WAR, WILLY... THE U.N.E.F. CENSORS THE NEWS. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE WE'VE RECEIVED ANY OBJECTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE FACTS.

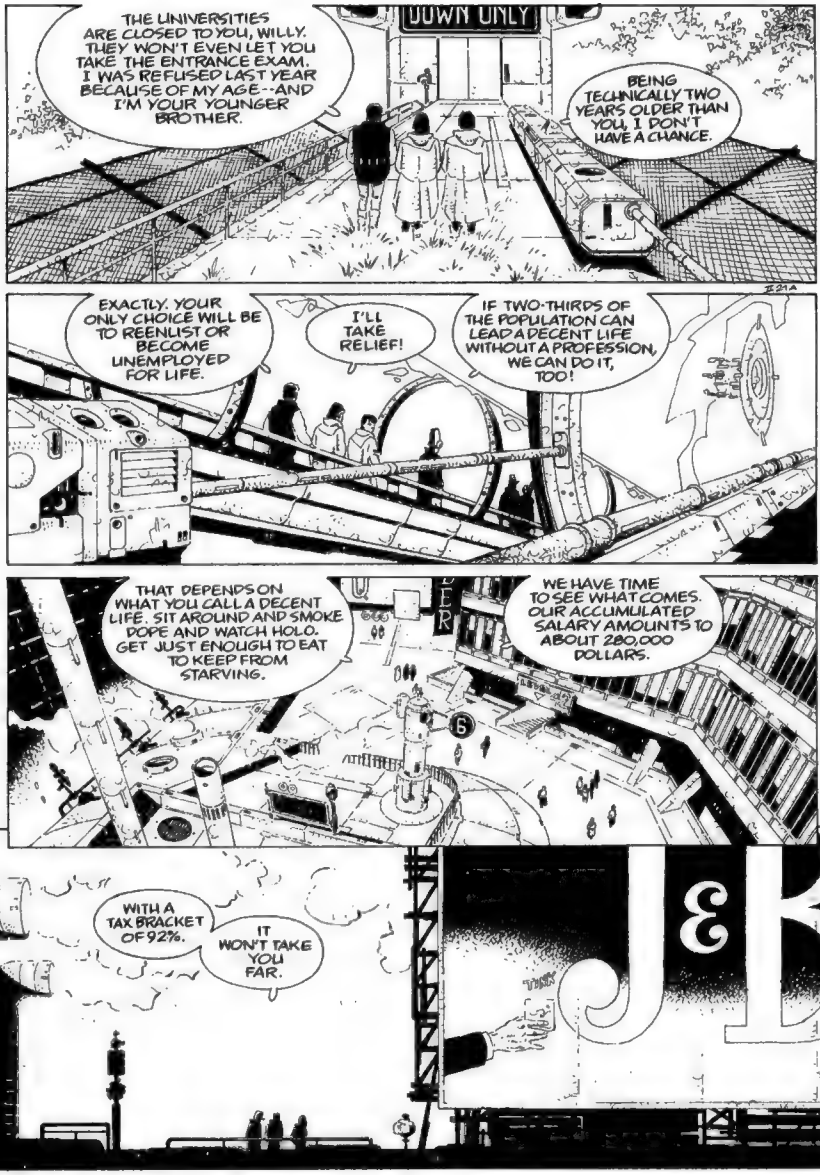
THE FOREVER WAR

BY
HALDEMAN & MARVANO



BOOK TWO
CHAPTER THREE

THE U.N.E.F. WILL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP YOU, WILLY. THEY OWN THE MOON, OF COURSE, AND ON MY JOB I, WELL, HEAR THINGS.
YEAH... ARMY SCUTTLEBUTT...
THEY DESPERATELY NEED INSTRUCTORS. THE ONES WHO TAUGHT YOU WERE VETERANS OF AFGHANISTAN OR THE SANAI. THEY'RE SEPTUGENARIANS. NOW YOU'RE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO'VE HAD CONCRETE EXPERIENCE WITH FIGHTING.
THE U.N.E.F. CONTROLS EMPLOYMENT, ABSOLUTELY. IF THEY NEED SOLDIERS, THAT'S THE ONLY JOB THEY'LL GIVE YOU. BELIEVE ME...
AND IF WE REFUSE?
EVERY WORK CENTER HAS ACCESS TO YOUR RECORDS. YOU CAN ONLY BE EMPLOYED ACCORDING TO YOUR U.N.E.F. EVALUATIONS, WITH ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS! YOU CAN BE A SOLDIER OR GO ON RELIEF.
I'D PLANNED TO GO BACK TO STUDYING PHYSICS. HARD TO CATCH UP, BUT...


THE UNIVERSITIES ARE CLOSED TO YOU, WILLY. THEY WON'T EVEN LET YOU TAKE THE ENTRANCE EXAM. I WAS REFUSED LAST YEAR BECAUSE OF MY AGE--AND I'M YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER.
DOWN ONLY
BEING TECHNICALLY TWO YEARS OLDER THAN YOU, I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE.
EXACTLY. YOUR ONLY CHOICE WILL BE TO REENLIST OR BECOME UNEMPLOYED FOR LIFE.
I'LL TAKE RELIEF!
IF TWO-THIRDS OF THE POPULATION CAN LEAD A DECENT LIFE WITHOUT A PROFESSION, WE CAN DO IT, TOO!
THAT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU CALL A DECENT LIFE. SIT AROUND AND SMOKE DOPE AND WATCH HOLO. GET JUST ENOUGH TO EAT TO KEEP FROM STARVING.
WE HAVE TIME TO SEE WHAT COMES. OUR ACCUMULATED SALARY AMOUNTS TO ABOUT 280,000 DOLLARS.
WITH A TAX BRACKET OF 92%.
IT WON'T TAKE YOU FAR.

ANYTHING IS PREFERABLE TO THE ARMY, MIKE. WE DIDN'T GROW UP IN THIS; WE'RE NOT LIKELY TO SIT AROUND HALF-BLOWN AND STARE AT THE CUBE ALL DAY.
I LIKE TO PAINT. I ALWAYS WANTED TO SETTLE DOWN AND SEE HOW GOOD I COULD BECOME.
PHYSICS INTERESTS ME. I CAN STUDY IT WITHOUT WORKING FOR A DEGREE.
SURE. WELCOME TO THE NEW RENAISSANCE.
HE SAID IT WITH NO INFLECTION, AND GESTURED WITH HIS PIPE AROUND THE ROOM.
THIS IS A WEIRD PLACE, ALL RIGHT. SOME KIND OF A GAY BAR?
ARE YOU KIDDING? HALF THE POPULATION PRACTICES HOMOSEXUALITY...
THE U.N.E.F. ENCOURAGES IT.
ONE SURE WAY TO CONTROL POPULATION GROWTH...

INTERVIEW WITH VETERAN MANDELLA. CUE SET THREE.
SERGEANT MANDELLA, YOU ARE ONE OF THE MOST DECORATED VETERANS OF THE U.N.E.F. FORCES. YOU PARTICIPATED IN THE FAMOUS BATTLE ON ALEPH-NULL AND YOU RETURNED FROM A RAID ON YOD-4.
WELL... IT WASN'T EXACTLY A RAID...
LET'S LEAVE YOD-4 ASIDE! WE WERE ALL VERY IMPRESSED BY THE FACT THAT YOU ARE ONE OF THE FEW SOLDIERS TO HAVE SEEN THE TAURANS UP CLOSE...
THEY'RE RATHER HORRIBLE, AREN'T THEY?
Hmm... OF COURSE... BUT I SUPPOSE THEY'D SAY THE SAME THING ABOUT US.
AND... THEIR SMELL?
WHAT?
I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA. ALL YOU CAN SMELL IN A SPACE SUIT IS YOURSELF!
HA! HA! OF COURSE! TELL ME IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT IMPRESSION DID MEETING THE ENEMY MAKE ON YOU? WOULD YOU CALL IT FEAR? DISGUST? OR WHAT?
WE WEREN'T AFRAID... AT LEAST NOT DURING COMBAT...
WE WERE CONDITIONED TO HATE. A HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION...
SECRETLY DONE TO US DURING OUR TRAINING, WHICH TRANSFORMED US INTO ROBOTS...
WE EXTERMINATED THE TAURANS, ALTHOUGH THEY OFFERED NO REAL RESISTANCE...
AND THEN, WHEN OUR HYPNOTIC RAGE WAS TURNED OFF...
M12
M13
M14
M15

AND... THEIR SMELL?
DREADFUL! A MIXTURE OF ROTTEN VEGETABLES AND SULFUR FUMES.
HUH?
IT'D MAKE YOU VOMIT!
GOD DAMN IT! I DIDN'T SAY THAT!
THE STENCH PENETRATED OUR SPACE SUITS...
WHAT A CROCK OF SHIT! THEY CAN MAKE YOU SAY ANYTHING THEY WANT?
THAT'S WHAT PASSES FOR NEWS, BROTHER. SOMETIMES THEY JUST REPLACE YOU WITH AN ACTOR.
WE'LL BE BACK AFTER THESE MESSAGES...
MIKE...
YES?
IS IT BETTER ON THE MOON?
NO.
BUT EVERYONE WORKS FOR THE U.N.E.F. UP THERE...
SO WE'RE USED TO THE BULLSHIT.
LEBANON
THEY SWEETENED UP THE HYPNOTIC CONDITIONING PART!
WHAT ELSE?
THEY NEED HEROES, NOT ROBOTS.

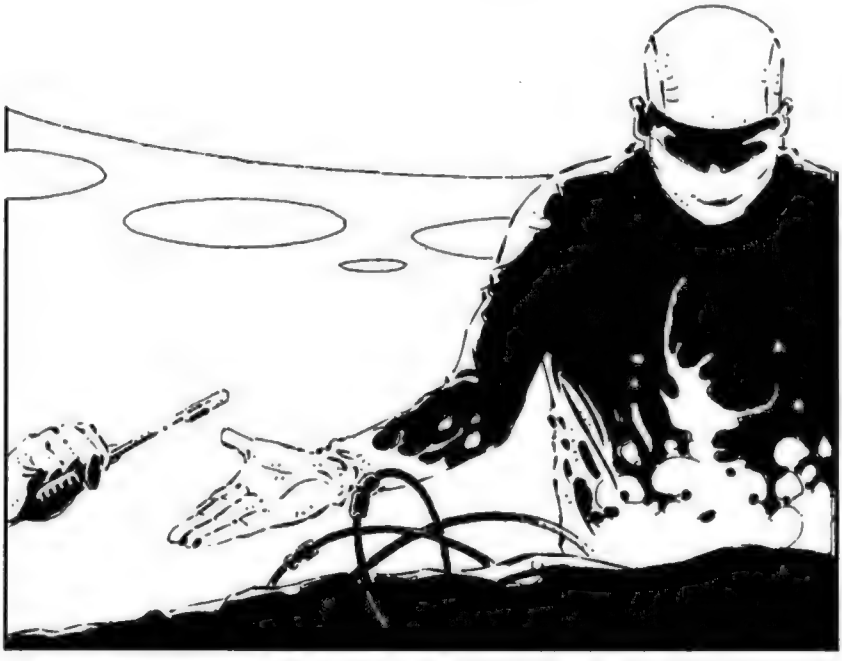
MIKE'S LEAVE CAME TO AN END. HE RETURNED TO HIS JOB ON THE MOON, WHILE MARYSAY AND I SPENT A FEW DAYS IN THE MOUNTAINS.
WHEN WE CAME BACK, THE NIGHTMARE BEGAN.
Actifed
PECTOCOL
HAVE YOU SEEN A DOCTOR, MOM?
Vicks
A DOCTOR? NO, WILLY, THERE'S NOTHING...
KOF KOF KOF
THERE'S NOTHING FOR A DOCTOR TO DO... IT'S NOT SERIOUS...
NOT SERIOUS?
AT EIGHTY-FOUR YEARS OLD? MY GOD, MOM!
CENTRAL HOSPITAL, GENERAL SERVICE, AIDE DONALSON.
CH
MY MOTHER NEEDS A DOCTOR. SHE'S...
NAME AND REGISTER NUMBER, PLEASE.
CH

BETTY MANDELLA. WHAT NUMBER?
HER MEDICAL SERVICES NUMBER, OF COURSE.
I DON'T KNOW IT, MISS. COULD YOU...
ONE SECOND, SIR. I'LL FIND THE FILE.
MANDELLA...
BETTY MANDELLA...
YOU'RE HER SON?! SHE'S MORE THAN EIGHTY YEARS OLD!
IT'S A LONG STORY, MISS. LET ME SPEAK TO A DOCTOR...
BUT... IS THIS A JOKE?
WHAT? LISTEN. MY MOTHER IS SICK. SHE NEEDS...
LOOK, SIR, Mrs. MANDELLA HAS HAD A PRIORITY CODE ZERO SINCE 2027!
AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, DAMN IT?
SIR!
OKAY, LISTEN. I JUST ARRIVED FROM ANOTHER PLANET. WHAT IS THIS CODE ZERO?
ANOTHER?... BUT... I RECOGNIZE YOU! SONYA! COME QUICK! YOU'LL NEVER GUESS...
WHAT?... OH!... MAX! ONE OF THE VETERANS!... THAT'S REALLY MAX!
Oh, Mr. MANDELLA! NO WONDER YOU'RE CONFUSED... BUT IT'S REALLY VERY SIMPLE!
WELL, THEN?

THE CODE WAS INTRODUCED WITH THE UNIVERSAL MEDICAL SECURITY SYSTEM. EVERYONE RECEIVES A CODE NUMBER FROM GENEVA ON THEIR SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.
WHAT DOES THIS CODE MEAN?
WELL... IT DETERMINES A PERSON'S SOCIAL IMPORTANCE. THE MORE USEFUL SHE IS TO SOCIETY, THE HIGHER THE CODE, ALLOWING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF TREATMENT. THE HIGHEST IS CODE THREE. AT TWO, YOU GET REGULAR CARE WITHOUT TREATMENTS THAT PROLONG YOUR LIFE...
AND CODE ZERO MEANS NO CARE AT ALL?
THAT'S RIGHT, Mr. MANDELLA.
I FOUND MOUNTAINEERS' OXYGEN AND GOT ANTIBIOTICS ON THE BLACK MARKET. BUT IT WAS TOO LATE...
MY AMATEUR EFFORTS COULDN'T SAVE HER. SHE DIED FOUR DAYS LATER.
THE PEOPLE AT THE CREMATORIUM HAD THE SAME FIXED SMILES AS AIDE DONALSON AND THE TELEVISION INTERVIEWER.
WE SPENT THE NIGHT TALKING, DRINKING AND SMOKING JOINTS, MARY SAY AND I. PERHAPS WE WOULD HAVE MADE ANOTHER DECISION IF WE WEREN'T THERE, SURROUNDED BY MOTHER'S LIFE AND DEATH.

THE FOREVER WAR

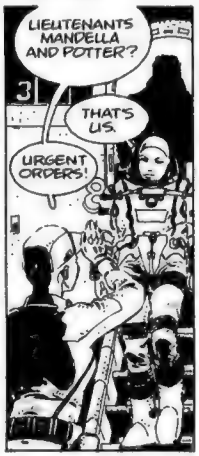
BY
HALDEMAN & MARVANO

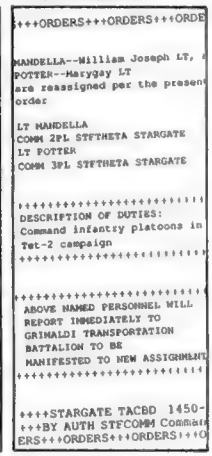


BOOK TWO
CHAPTER FOUR

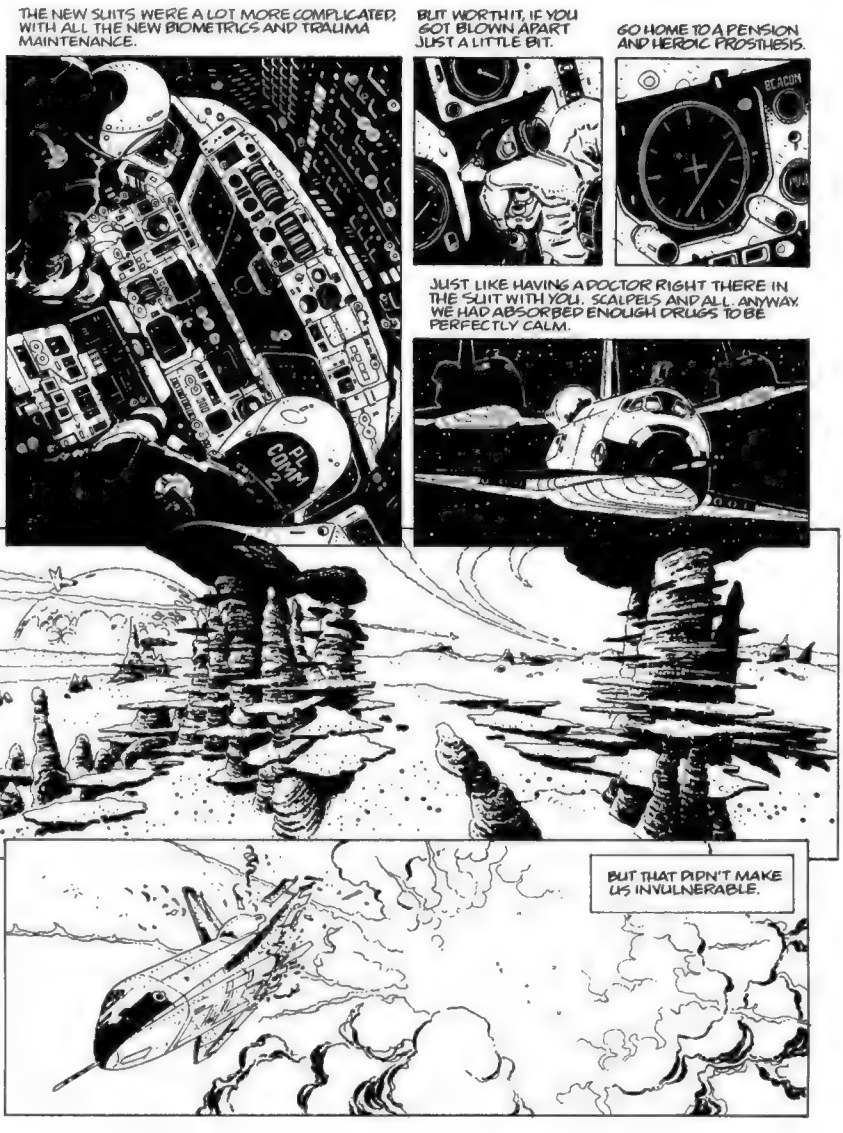
"WILLY, THE EARTH IS NO PLACE FOR YOU AND MARYGAY," MIKE TOLD US ON THE VIDEO-PHONE.
"COME TO THE MOON; THERE'S STILL SOME FREEDOM HERE AND WE DON'T CHUCK PEOPLE OUT THE AIRLOCK ON THEIR SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY."
BUT WE'D STILL HAVE TO JOIN THE U.N.E.F. AGAIN.
RIGHT. THERE'S NO CHOICE ABOUT THAT. BUT THEY SAY THEY NEED INSTRUCTORS. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.

THE U.N.E.F. PROMOTED US TO LIEUTENANT AND ENROLLED US AS INSTRUCTORS ON THE MOON...

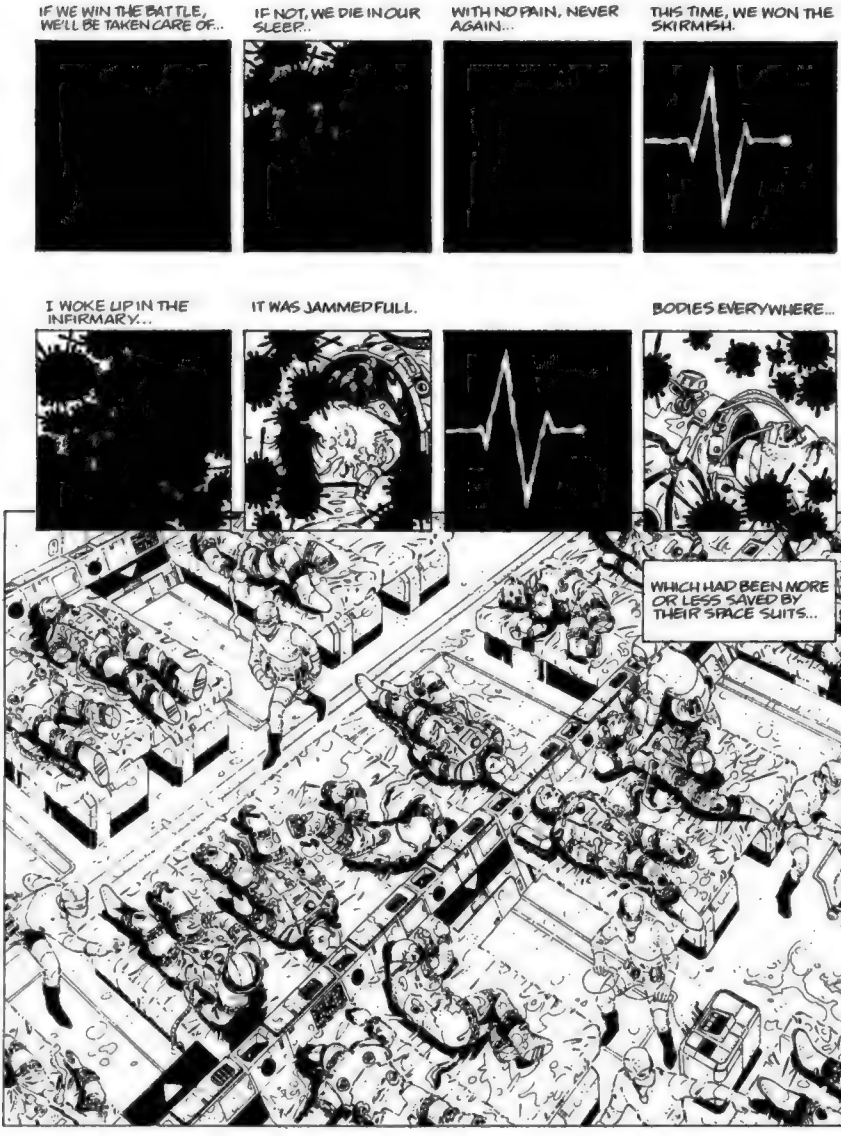

WE SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED WHAT WAS WAITING FOR US THERE.
LIEUTENANTS MANDELLA AND POTTER?
THAT'S US.
URGENT ORDERS!
3

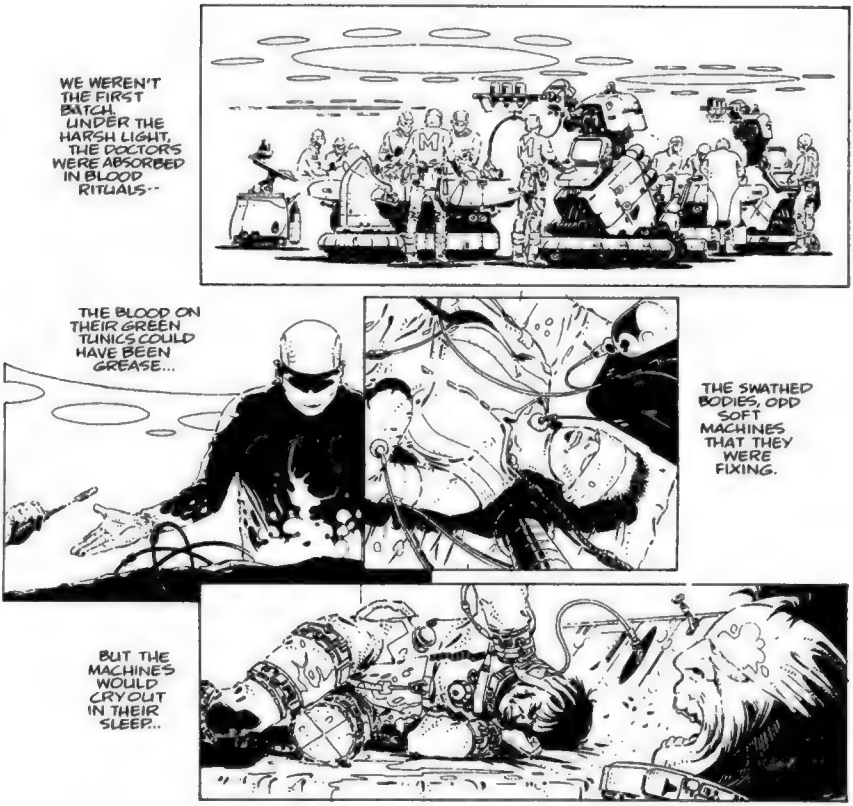

NOBODY GUARANTEED US THAT THE TEACHING ASSIGNMENT WOULD LAST MORE THAN A FEW MOMENTS--
+++ORDERS+++ORDERS+++ORDE
MANDELLA--William Joseph LT,
POTTER--Marygay LT
are reassigned per the presen
order
LT MANDELLA
COMM 2PL STFTHETA STARGATE
LT POTTER
COMM 3PL STFTHETA STARGATE
DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES:
Command infantry platoons in
Tet-2 campaign
ABOVE NAMED PERSONNEL WILL
REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO
GRIMALDI TRANSPORTATION
BATTALION TO BE
MANIFESTED TO NEW ASSIGNMENT
++++STARGATE TACBD 1450-
+++BY AUTH STFCOMM Commar
ERS+++ORDERS+++ORDERS+++O

++++++++++++++++++++
DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES:
Command infantry platoons in
Tet-2 campaign
++++++++++++++++++++++++++
THEY DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME, THE SHITHEADS!
COMMAND AN INFANTRY PLATOON? ME?
COMMANDER CORTEZ WE'RE ENTERING LOW ORBIT. READY TO LAUNCH THE ASSAULT SHUTTLES. 10...9... 8...7...6...
I HAD TWO DISTURBING FEELINGS... THAT ALL ALONG WE KNEW THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
THAT WE WERE GOING HOME. THE ONLY HOME WE HAD.
5...4... 3...
2...1...
GO!
GOOD LUCK, WILL.
WE'LL GET OUT OF THIS!
MARCELLA
PUTTER


THE NEW SUITS WERE A LOT MORE COMPLICATED, WITH ALL THE NEW BIOMETRICS AND TRAUMA MAINTENANCE.
BUT WORTH IT, IF YOU GOT BLOWN APART JUST A LITTLE BIT.
GO HOME TO A PENSION AND HEROIC PROSTHESIS.
BEACON
JUST LIKE HAVING A DOCTOR RIGHT THERE IN THE SUIT WITH YOU. SCALPELS AND ALL. ANYWAY, WE HAD ABSORBED ENOUGH DRUGS TO BE PERFECTLY CALM.
BUT THAT DIDN'T MAKE US INVULNERABLE.

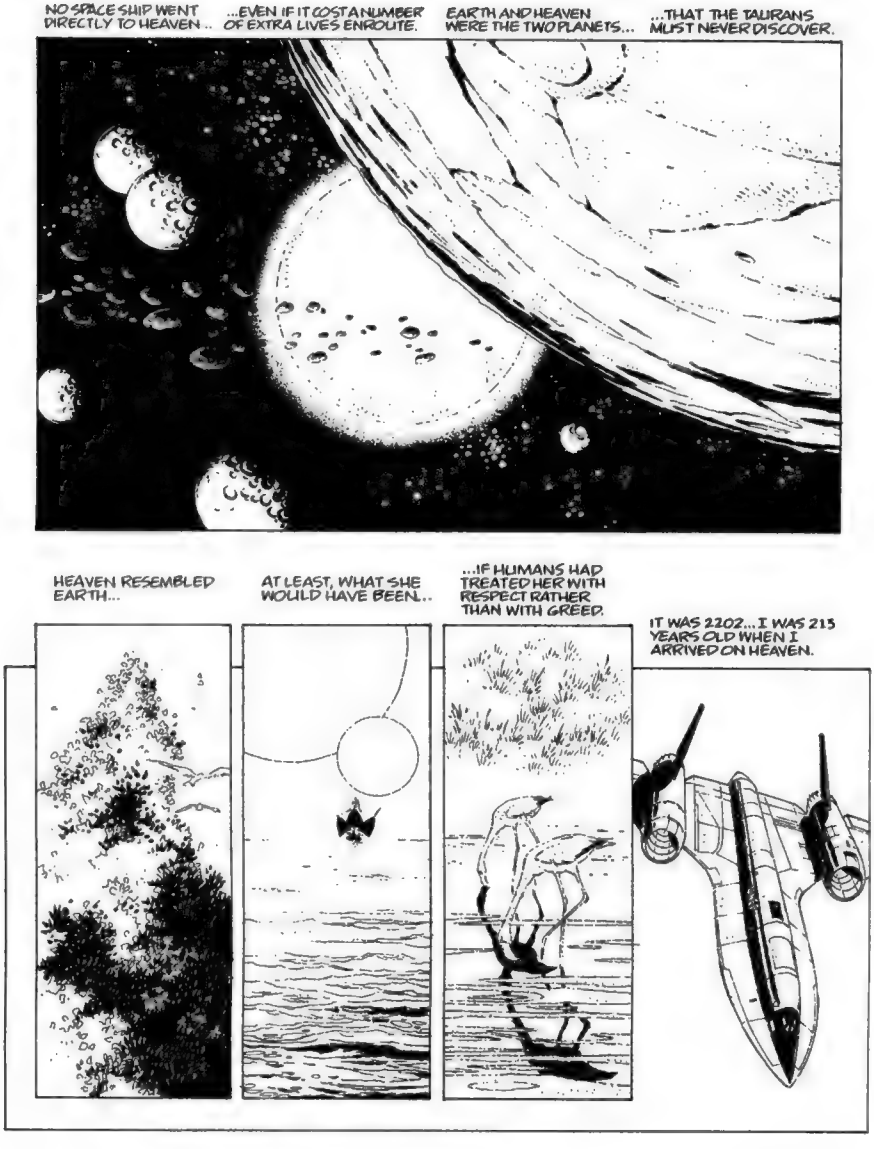
I SAW THE HORIZON SWING BACK AND FORTH WHEN THE REAR OF THE SHUTTLE EXPLODED.
SUDDEN AGONY AS SOMETHING CRUSHED MY LEG--
--THEN MORE PAIN AND A SHARP SNIP AS ONE OF THE SURGICAL SECTIONS OF MY SUIT CLAMPED ITS SCALPELS OVER THE STUMP.
CAUTERIZATION...
AUTOMATIC TRANSFUSION...
ANTI-SHOCK...
A TASTE OF LEATHER...
A SCARLET MIST THAT ERASED EVERYTHING...
IT WAS NOT VERY SERIOUS.


IF WE WIN THE BATTLE, WE'LL BE TAKEN CARE OF...
IF NOT, WE DIE IN OUR SLEEP...
WITH NO PAIN, NEVER AGAIN...
THIS TIME, WE WON THE SKIRMISH.
I WOKE UP IN THE INFIRMARY...
IT WAS JAMMED FULL.
BODIES EVERYWHERE...
WHICH HAD BEEN MORE OR LESS SAVED BY THEIR SPACE SUITS...


WE WEREN'T THE FIRST BATCH. UNDER THE HARSH LIGHT, THE DOCTORS WERE ABSORBED IN BLOOD RITUALS--
THE BLOOD ON THEIR GREEN TUNICS COULD HAVE BEEN GREASE...
THE SWATHED BODIES, ODD SOFT MACHINES THAT THEY WERE FIXING.
BUT THE MACHINES WOULD CRY OUT IN THEIR SLEEP...
...AND THE MECHANICS MUTTERED REASSURANCES...
...WHILE THEY PLIED THEIR GREASY TOOLS.
I SLEPT, AND WOKE IN PAIN, AND TRIED TO SLEEP AGAIN--
THOUGH EVEN MY DREAMS WERE FULL OF BLOOD AND PAIN.

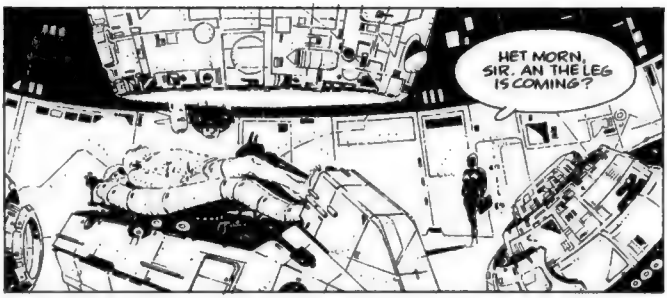
HELLO, BROKEN TOY.
HOW... HOW DO YOU FEEL?
BRILLIANT QUESTION.

DOC WILSON CAME IN.
STILL IN SEPERATE BEDS? I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN BETTER SHAPE THAN THAT!
I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU STRAIGHT. YOU'RE ON HAPPYJUICE UP TO YOUR EARS, AND THE LOSS YOU'VE SUSTAINED WON'T BOTHER YOU UNTIL YOU'RE OFF IT.
FOR MY OWN CONVENIENCE, I HAVE TO KEEP YOU IN THIS STATE. WE HAVE TWENTY-ONE AMPUTEES--
--AND WE CAN'T HANDLE TWENTY-ONE PSYCHIATRIC CASES.
WE WILL FIT YOUR PROSTHESES WHEN WE ARRIVE AT HEAVEN.
AT HEAVEN?!
HEAVEN, THE U.N.E.F.'s NEW HOSPITAL PLANET. AN IDEAL SPOT TO PUT YOU BOTH BACK TOGETHER.
WE'LL BE THERE FOR THREE MONTHS, REAL TIME. ENJOY YOUR PEACE OF MIND WHILE YOU HAVE IT--
...BECAUSE EVENTUALLY, EVERY TIME YOU LOOK AT HER ARTIFICIAL ARM...
...AND YOU HIS MECHINICAL LEG...
YOU WILL EACH THINK THAT THE OTHER HAD BETTER LUCK.
YOU MAY BE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS...
...OR YOU MIGHT STAY TOGETHER OUT OF MUTUAL PITY.
OR TRANSCEND IT. GIVE EACH OTHER STRENGTH.
JUST DON'T KID YOURSELVES IF IT DOESN'T WORK OUT.

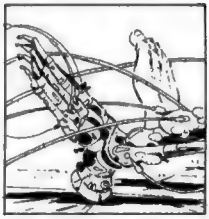

NO SPACE SHIP WENT DIRECTLY TO HEAVEN..
...EVEN IF IT COST A NUMBER OF EXTRA LIVES ENROUTE.
EARTH AND HEAVEN WERE THE TWO PLANETS...
...THAT THE TAURANS MUST NEVER DISCOVER.
HEAVEN RESEMBLED EARTH...
AT LEAST, WHAT SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN...
...IF HUMANS HAD TREATED HER WITH RESPECT RATHER THAN WITH GREED.
IT WAS 2202... I WAS 215 YEARS OLD WHEN I ARRIVED ON HEAVEN.

THE SCIENCE OF PROSTHESIS HAD ADVANCED CONSIDERABLY IN TWO CENTURIES...

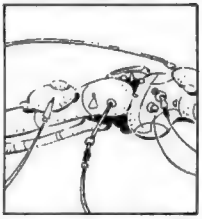
I WAS GROWING A REAL LEG.



ALMOST UNBREAKABLE METAL BONES!



BUT THE TREATMENT CAUSED NUMEROUS LOCAL CANCERS...



THAT HAD TO BE TREATED SEPARATELY, PAINFULLY.

A MAN HAS TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING.

ARE YOU BEING IN THE SERVICE A LONG TIME, SIR?
I HAVEN'T SEEN EARTH IN MORE THAN A CENTURY. DO ALL ENGLISH SPEAKERS ON EARTH HAVE THIS NEW THICK ACCENT? I'D HAVE TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL TO RELEARN MY OWN LANGUAGE!

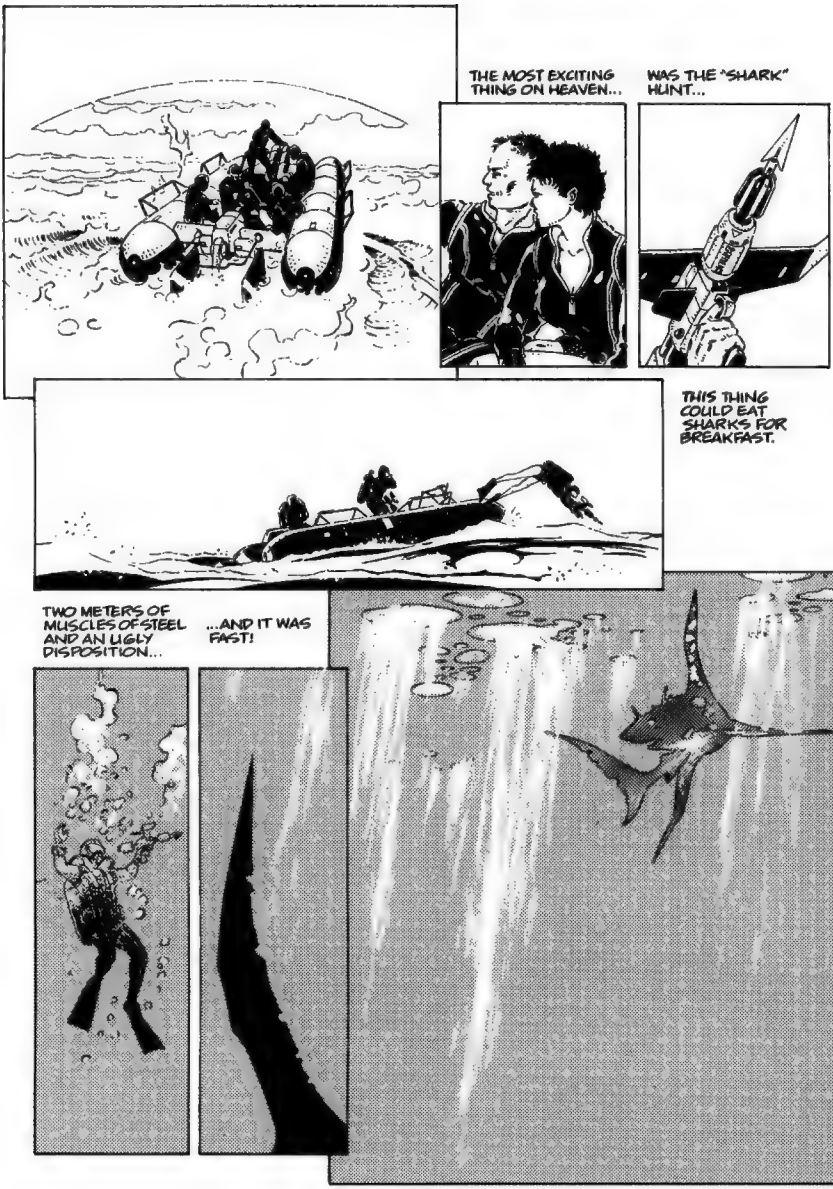
NOT SURPRISING THAT I COULDN'T PLACE HER ACCENT!

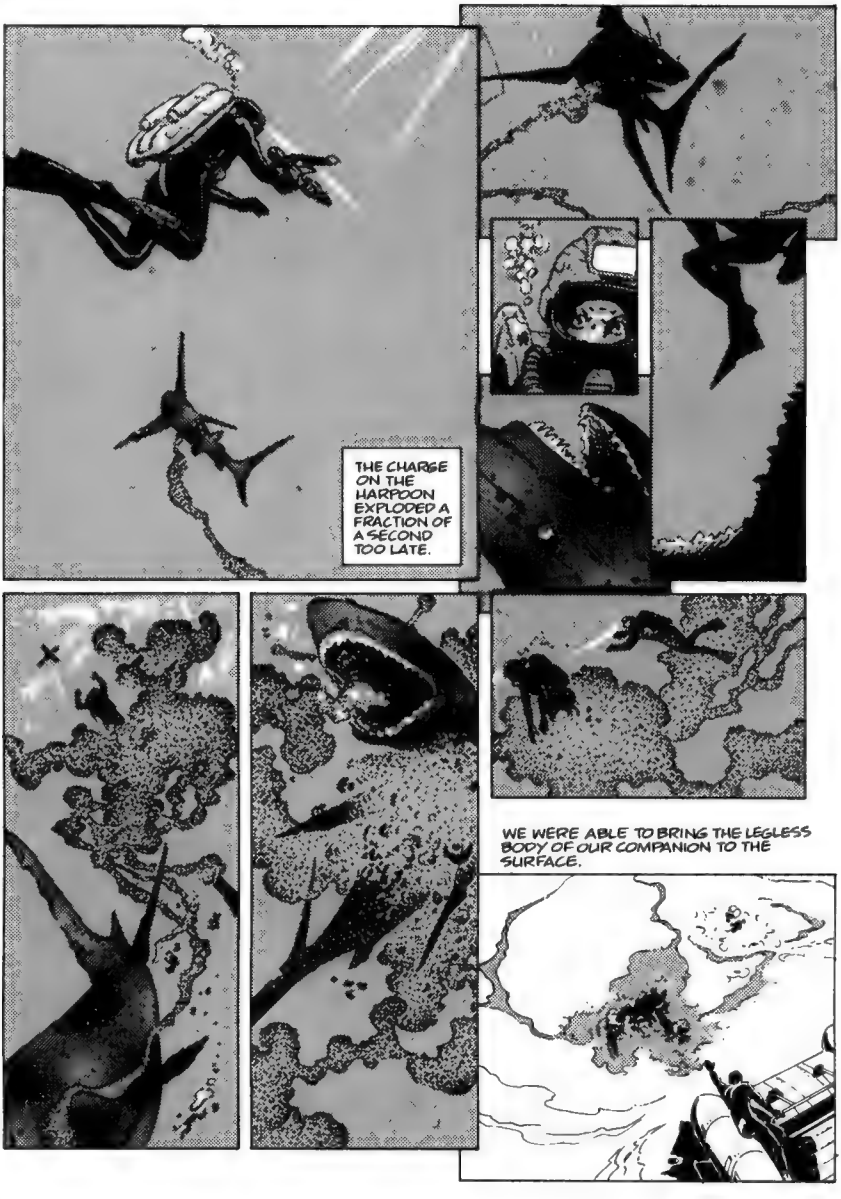
A THIRD GENERATION ANGEL, SIR.
POKED, BORNED AND DRAFTED ON HEAVEN.
DON'T MOVE, SIR.
HER GRANDPARENTS CAME FROM EARTH WHEN I WAS A YOUNG PUNK OF A HUNDRED. HOW MANY OTHER WORLDS HAD THEY COLONIZED WHILE MY BACK WAS TURNED?
MARYGAY WAS ALREADY UP. WHEN HER SCHEDULE PERMITTED, SHE CAME TO KEEP ME COMPANY. WE TALKED, READ, PLAYED CHESS... HER ARM WAS ABOUT AS PRETTY AS MY LEG, BUT GROWING.
THEY TRANSFERRED US TO ORTHOPEDICS, FOR "RANGE AND MOTION REPATTERNING"...
A FANCY NAME FOR SLOW TORTURE...
THEY STRAP YOU INTO A MACHINE THAT TWISTS THE OLD LEG AND THE NEW ONE AT THE SAME TIME.
THE NEW ONE RESISTS.
WE BOTH BEGAN SWIMMING. I STILL LIMPED ON LAND, BUT GOT AROUND OKAY IN THE WATER.

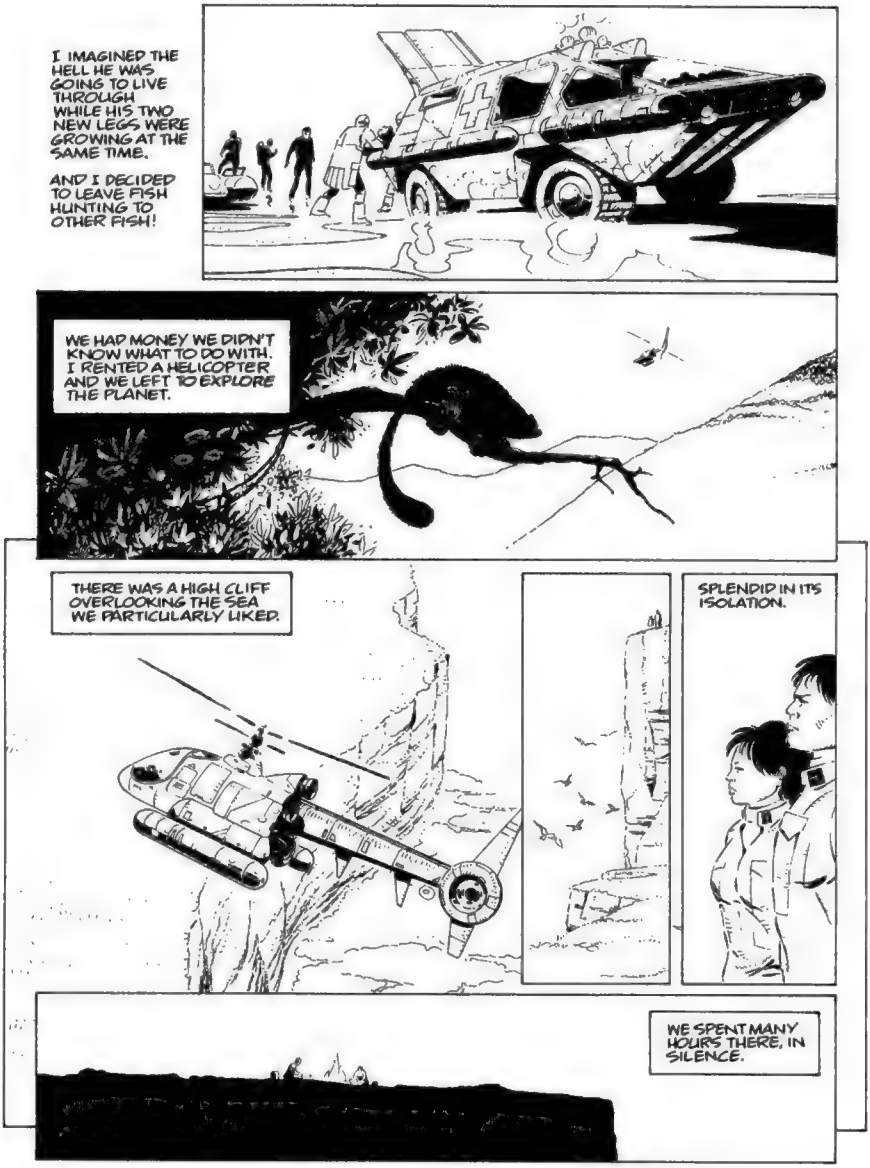
THE FOREVER WAR

BY
HALDEMAN & MARVANO

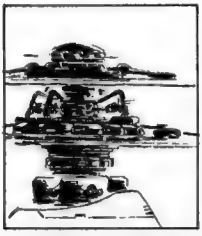
BOOK TWO
CHAPTER FIVE

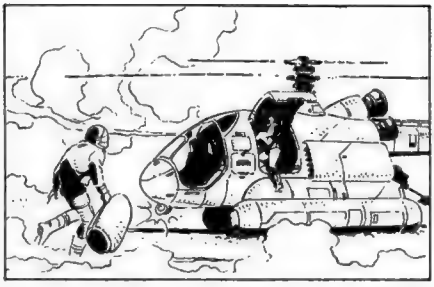

THE MOST EXCITING THING ON HEAVEN...
WAS THE "SHARK" HUNT...
THIS THING COULD EAT SHARKS FOR BREAKFAST.
TWO METERS OF MUSCLES OF STEEL AND AN UGLY DISPOSITION...
...AND IT WAS FAST!


THE CHARGE ON THE HARPOON EXPLODED A FRACTION OF A SECOND TOO LATE.
WE WERE ABLE TO BRING THE LEGLESS BODY OF OUR COMPANION TO THE SURFACE.


I IMAGINED THE HELL HE WAS GOING TO LIVE THROUGH WHILE HIS TWO NEW LEGS WERE GROWING AT THE SAME TIME.
AND I DECIDED TO LEAVE FISH HUNTING TO OTHER FISH!
WE HAD MONEY WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH. I RENTED A HELICOPTER AND WE LEFT TO EXPLORE THE PLANET.
THERE WAS A HIGH CLIFF OVERLOOKING THE SEA WE PARTICULARLY LIKED.
SPLENDID IN ITS ISOLATION.
WE SPENT MANY HOURS THERE, IN SILENCE.

BUT WE WERE STILL IN THE ARMY...



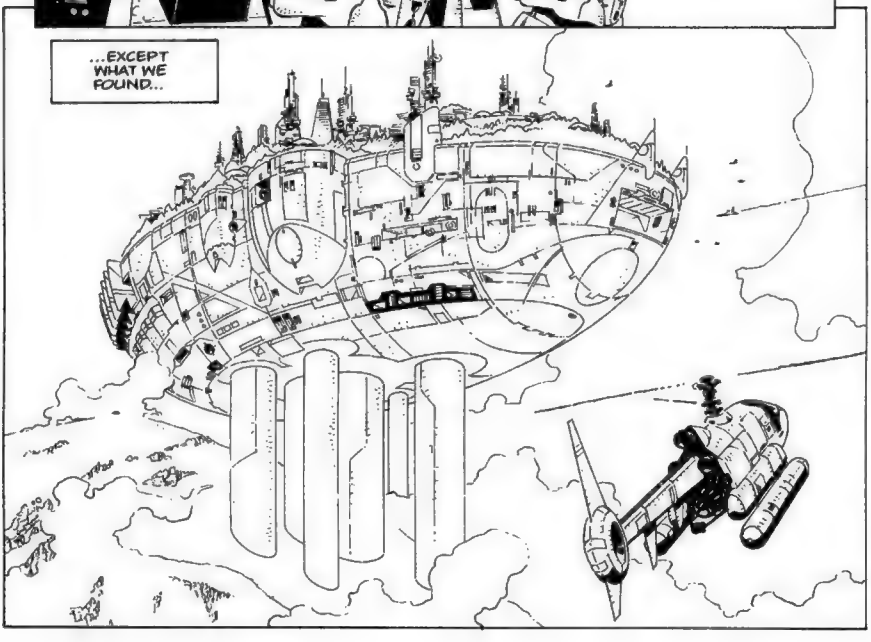


IN THE VAST MILITARY MACHINE, WE WERE JUST USED PARTS THAT, ONCE RECONDITIONED, MUST RETURN TO THEIR POSITION ON THE FRONT LINE.

WE SPENT THE LAST WEEKS OF OUR LEAVE AT THE SKYE STATION.

WE EXPECTED ANYTHING...

...EXCEPT WHAT WE FOUND...

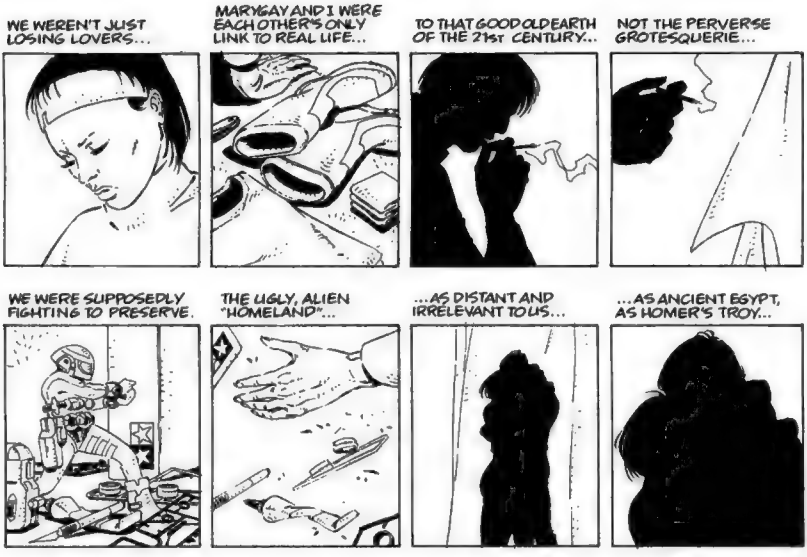


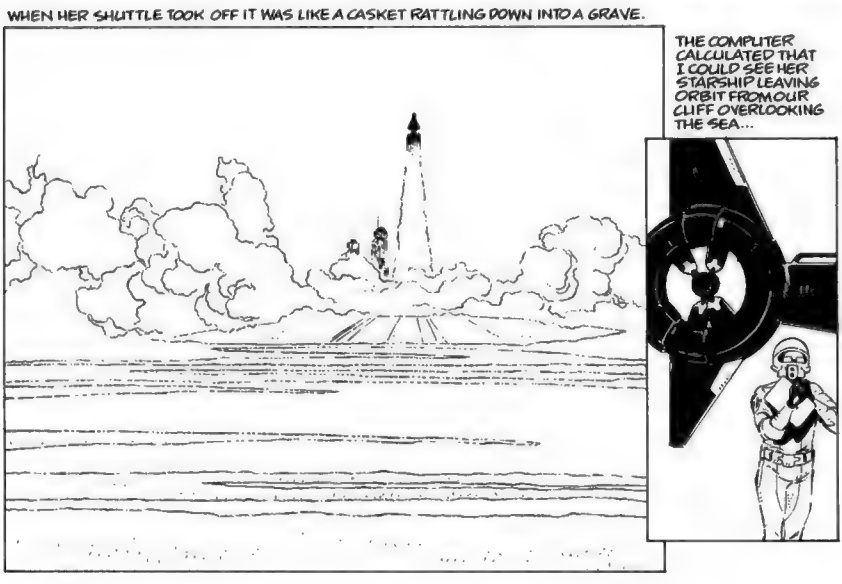
IT WAS A WORLD ENTIRELY DEDICATED TO LEISURE, WHERE YOU COULD BUY ANYTHING...
INFANTRY SOLDIER MODEL KIT
ALEPH RAID MODEL
HIGHLY DETAILED
$200
EXCEPT HOPE AND FORGETFULNESS...
OUR CHANCES OF SURVIVING THE NEXT THREE YEARS OF SERVICE WERE MICROSCOPIC.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE UNKNOWN, WE WANTED TO SAMPLE ALL OF LIFE'S PLEASURES, PERHAPS FOR THE LAST TIME.
BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE PLEASURES WAS SPENDING OUR LAST DAYS OF LIBERTY TOGETHER. NOTHING COULD HAVE PLEASED US MORE.
SPECIAL DELIVERY FOR LIEUTENANTS MANDELLA AND POTTER.
ORDERS FOR OUR NEW ASSIGNMENT...
STARGATE...
+++ORDERS+++C
he following named per
MANDELLA, William Joseph
rank: Major
will present himself
to Threshold Transport
Battalion
for reassignment to
STARGATE
with the title of
MILITARY INSTRUCTOR
COMPANY
++++++++++++++++++++++++++
eceived at
EGCOM SKYE
++BY LT
STARGATE?!

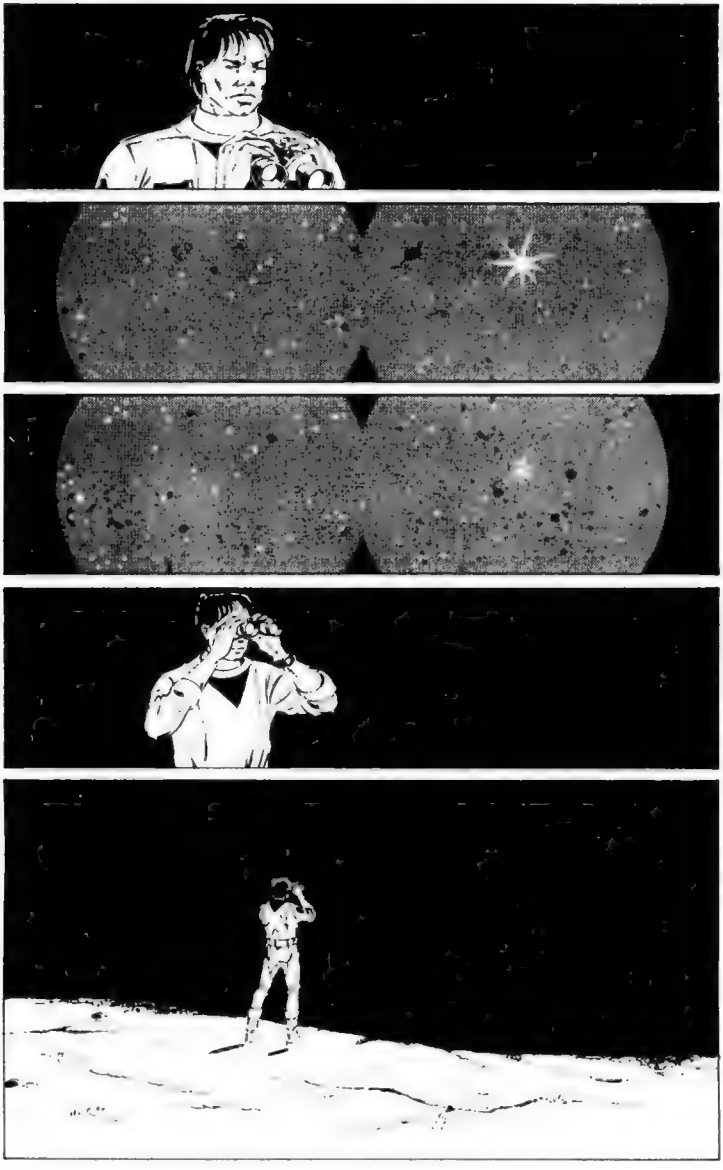
+ORDERS+++ORDERS+++
The following named p
POTTER, Marygay
rank: Captain
will present herself
to Threshold Transpor
Battalion
for reassignment to
YOD-42
as EXECUTIVE OFFICER
STFBETA
++++++++++++++++++++
Received at
REGCOM SKYE
++++BY LT. GEW
date 10-05-2203
WE REQUEST A CHANGE OF ASSIGNMENT.
FOR WHAT REASON, MAJOR?
COULDN'T HE SEE?
I WANT TO USE CAPTAIN POTTER AS MY EXECUTIVE OFFICER. WE'VE FOUGHT TOGETHER SINCE THE BEGINNING, AND...
YOUR COMMAND GROUP IS ALREADY COMPLETE, MAJOR.

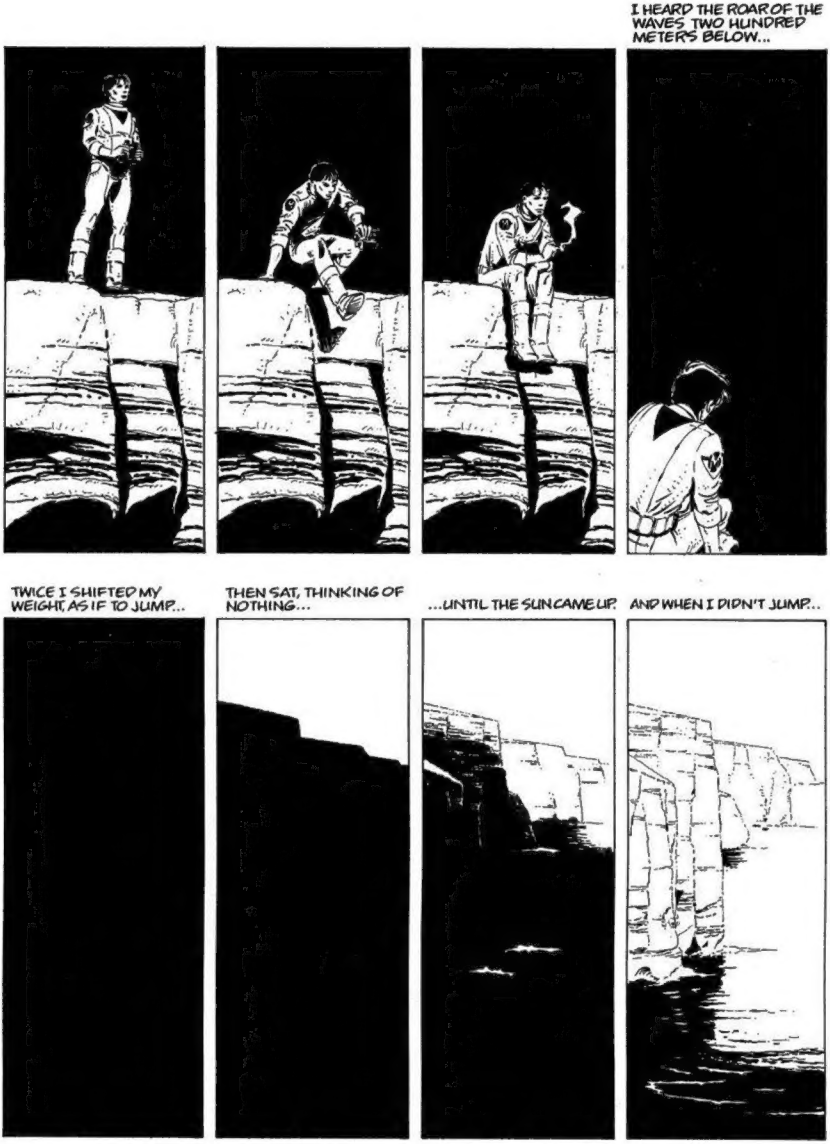
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE! IT'LL BE ALMOST A CENTURY BEFORE I ARRIVE AT STARGATE. THE RECRUITS I'LL HAVE TO TRAIN AREN'T EVEN BORN YET!
THAT'S RIGHT, MAJOR, BUT THEY WILL BE READY.
SURELY YOU CAN SEE WHAT THIS MEANS TO US!
EVEN IF WE BOTH SURVIVE, GOING TO DIFFERENT STATIONS WILL FORCE A TEMPORAL GAP BETWEEN US!
WHEN ONE RETURNS, THE OTHER WILL PROBABLY HAVE BEEN DEAD FOR YEARS! CENTURIES!
CAPTAIN...
THE ARMY PLANS IN TERMS OF CENTURIES...
NOT IN TERMS OF PEOPLE.
MARYGAY WOULD LEAVE FIRST. WE HAD ONE DAY AND ONE NIGHT LEFT. THE LESS SAID ABOUT THAT TIME, THE BETTER...

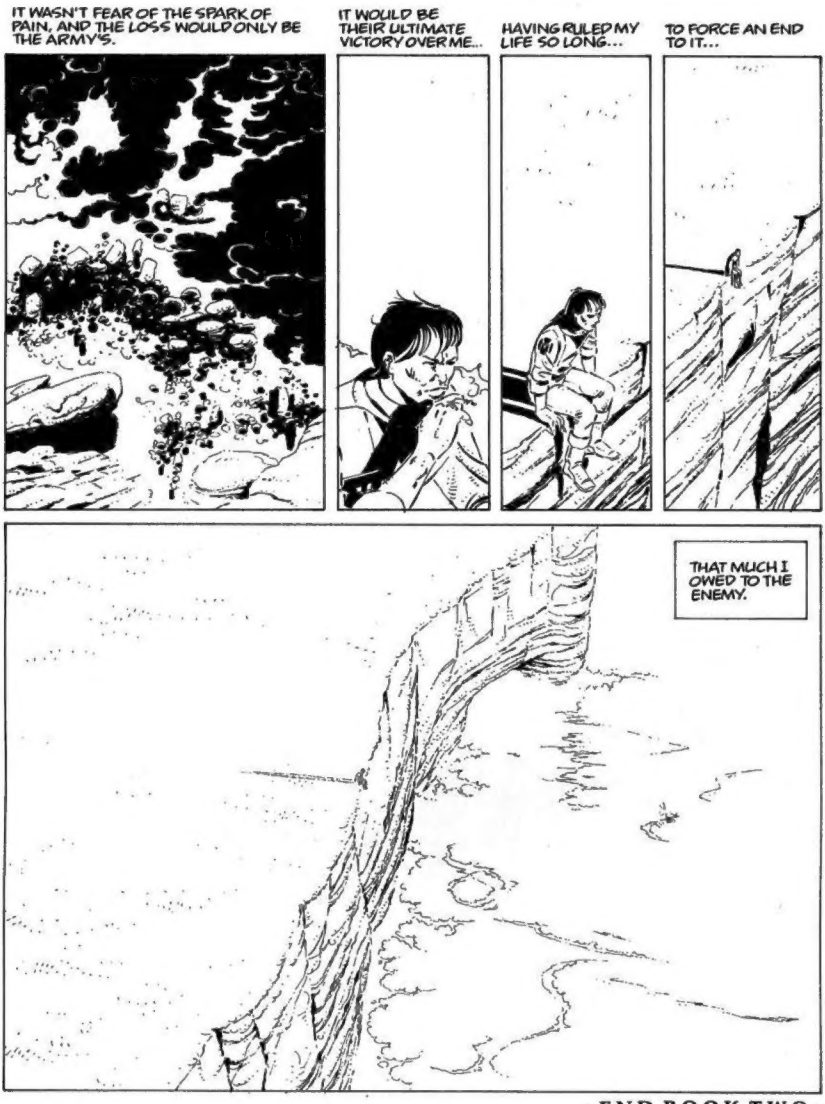

WE WEREN'T JUST LOSING LOVERS...
MARYGAY AND I WERE EACH OTHER'S ONLY LINK TO REAL LIFE...
TO THAT GOOD OLD EARTH OF THE 21st CENTURY...
NOT THE PERVERSE GROTESQUERIE...
WE WERE SUPPOSEDLY FIGHTING TO PRESERVE.
THE UGLY, ALIEN "HOMELAND"...
...AS DISTANT AND IRRELEVANT TO US...
...AS ANCIENT EGYPT, AS HOMER'S TROY...


WHEN HER SHUTTLE TOOK OFF IT WAS LIKE A CASKET RATTLING DOWN INTO A GRAVE.
THE COMPUTER CALCULATED THAT I COULD SEE HER STARSHIP LEAVING ORBIT FROM OUR CLIFF OVERLOOKING THE SEA...

I LANDED THE HELICOPTER AT OUR USUAL SPOT.
A NEW STAR APPEARED. MARY GAY'S SHIP... IT FLARED TO BRILLIANCE, THEN FADED AS IT MOVED AWAY.


BECOMING JUST ANOTHER STAR...
AND THEN A DIM STAR...
AND THEN NOTHING.
MARYGAY..


I HEARD THE ROAR OF THE WAVES TWO HUNDRED METERS BELOW...
TWICE I SHIFTED MY WEIGHT, AS IF TO JUMP...
THEN SAT, THINKING OF NOTHING...
...UNTIL THE SUN CAME UP.
AND WHEN I DIDN'T JUMP...


IT WASN'T FEAR OF THE SPARK OF PAIN, AND THE LOSS WOULD ONLY BE THE ARMY'S.
IT WOULD BE THEIR ULTIMATE VICTORY OVER ME...
HAVING RULED MY LIFE SO LONG...
TO FORCE AN END TO IT...
THAT MUCH I OWED TO THE ENEMY.

• END BOOK TWO •

"To say that *The Forever War* is the best science fiction war novel ever written is to damn it with faint praise. It is, for all its techno-extrapolative brilliance, as fine and woundingly genuine a war story as any I've read."
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